GEORGE SAND
AND
HER LOVERS

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BY

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PREFACE

FRENCH literary lives as a rule are interesting; English literary lives as a rule are not.

The rule, no doubt, has its exceptions. The life of Byron is more interesting than that of Alexis de Tocqueville; the life of Shelley is more interesting than that of Taine. It might be possible to compile a long list of exceptions by citing such extreme instances as these. But the rule would still remain, and one is tempted to seek a reason for it.

Probably the explanation should be sought, and would be found, in the difference between the attitudes which representative men and women of the two races respectively adopt towards their own personalities. In England the tone which prevails in these matters is that set at the public schools and universities. Its characteristics are reticence, self-control, shame-facedness in the presence of strong emotions, and a high regard for the conventional ideals. The public schoolman seldom aspires to be different from other public schoolmen. His ambition, when he is ambitious, is to be like them, but more brilliant—to succeed on approved lines, and conform to a recognised type. The man who diverges, however brilliantly, from the type, is not only mistrusted by his neighbours, but is apt to mistrust himself.

To this rule too, of course, there are exceptions. One finds them chiefly among aristocrats and among Jews. Byron and Disraeli are the two most obvious examples; and their cases are hardly to be paralleled among members of the English middle classes. These are almost invariably governed by the public school ideal of "form," whether they

have actually been at public schools or not. Women, in their slightly different way, are no less under the influence of that ideal than men. The result is that both men and women are ashamed, except within very narrow limits, to be eccentric. Their eccentricity, when they are eccentric, seldom gets beyond the buffoonery of an outlandish garb. To that extent a man of marked individuality may sometimes make his life a spectacular display. But there is no real cult of the ego among us—no tendency to treat the private life as if it were a public matter.

Hence the attitude of Englishmen and Englishwomen—especially of Englishwomen—towards their love affairs. It is not to be supposed (though no statistics are available) that, so far as actual conduct goes, we are much more austere than our neighbours. Where we differ from our neighbours is in our uncompromising refusal to regard love seriously where the relations of the lovers are "irregular." That is to say, what the Frenchman regards as a romance is regarded by the Englishman as intrigue. It is so regarded, not only by the lookers-on, who see most of the game, but also by the principals. And there results from this not only the reticence which good manners exact, but also a special kind of hypocrisy which the whole Continent declares, rightly or wrongly, to be peculiar to the British Isles.

The whole Continent, rightly or wrongly, sees a crowning example of that hypocrisy in the career of George Eliot. It is not the ethical aspect of her relations with George Henry Lewes, so often, and so acrimoniously, debated on this side of the Channel, that perturbs the foreign mind. Foreign critics are quite willing to apply to her case the famous saying of the tolerant monk of old: *Boniface did it, and not we; Boniface and not we will suffer for it; peace be*

with Boniface! What is incomprehensible to them is her yearning for the reputation of "respectability," and her calm assurance that she could achieve it by assuming the name to which another woman was legally entitled. For she was not Mrs. Lewes; and everybody knew that she was not Mrs. Lewes; and yet all her friends and acquaintances—both those who knew her well and those who knew her slightly—agreed to pretend that she was, and would assuredly have refused to visit her if, while living with Lewes, she had continued to call herself Mary Anne Evans. No wonder the foreign critics are puzzled, and see in the spectacle, not vice paying decent and decorous homage to virtue, but an individuality capable of better things grovelling at the feet of bourgeois conventions.

By such deceptions which deceive nobody, a Frenchman would say, romance is degraded to the level of intrigue; and he would add, to point the contrast, that the aim of his own countrymen and countrywomen is to raise intrigue to the dignity of romance. Certainly he might cite many instances in support of the latter proposition both among the romances which have ended happily and among those through which hearts have been broken. There is the case of Victor Hugo's exaltation of Juliette Drouet—not only his mistress but his Muse; there is the case of Alfred de Vigny writing his "Colères de Samson" because his Delilah had behaved after the fashion of her kind; there is the case of Chateaubriand celebrating his passion for Pauline de Beaumont, with whom he lived while writing "Le Génie du Christianisme." But the case of George Sand furnishes the best instance of all.

Living in an extravagant age, she gloried in her own contributions to its extravagance. She not only "lived her own

life," but boldly asserted her right to do so. Her feeling apparently was that, when she loved, she was making history; and she took pains that the future historian should not find the records incomplete. Not only did she most carefully preserve such records of her amours as her own and Alfred de Musset's letters, and leave directions that they should be published after her death: she also chronicled them from day to day—almost from hour to hour—in her letters to various friends: she told the story of her intimacy with Sandeau in letters to her son's tutor, Boucoiran; she took Sainte-Beuve into her confidence about her intimacies with Musset and Mérimée; she told her friend Girerd all about her intimacy with Michel de Bourges.

The material, therefore, for writing her life is ample, and the biographer who uses it cannot be accused of grubbing up old scandals. There is no grubbing to be done. George Sand provided the material, and meant it to be used. She did not regard the incidents related in this volume as scandalous either at the time or afterwards. If she had done so, she would not have written "Elle et Lui" when she was fifty-five. Her view in later life evidently was that her love affairs, no less than her early books, were a part of the Romantic Movement. To the historian, indeed, they are a very instructive part of it. One really needs to have the life of George Sand before one in order to understand how much more the Romantic Movement was than a revolt against the classical traditions of literature and the stage.

The strange thing is that, in spite of the abundance of the material, no full and adequate life of George Sand exists. There is plenty of literature bearing on the Musset episode—M. Paul Mariéton's "Une Histoire d'Amour," and M.

Maurras' "Les Amants de Venise," for instance—but most of the biographers have confined themselves to that one branch of the subject. Madame Karénine began a very elaborate biography, but the two volumes published carry us no farther than the year 1838. The little book contributed by Caro to Hachette's "Les grands Ecrivains français" is more critical than biographical. M. Le Roy's "George Sand et ses amis" gives rather more information, but needs to be supplemented in some particulars, especially when dealing with the events of George Sand's later years.

In English there is only the monograph written for the Eminent Women Series by Miss Bertha Thomas—a work which Madame Karénine declares to be pervaded by "British prudery." Miss Thomas evidently wrote for a very special public—not so large nowadays as it used to be—which esteems prudery a higher virtue than candour, only interests itself in "nice" people, and discovers some mysterious advantage in ignoring conduct of which it disapproves. If her pages were our sole authority, we should have to suppose that Jules Sandeau was only George Sand's collaborator, that Dr. Pagello was only her medical attendant, and that Michel de Bourges was only her legal adviser. The picture is of a woman who, in spite of her accidental association with the Romanticists, was really a British matron at heart. One admires the ingenuity of the conception, but still—*magis amica veritas*. At all events, there seems to be no good reason why the biographer who is not addressing Miss Thomas' special public should be any less candid than George Sand was herself, or should refrain from making full use of the records which George Sand deliberately and carefully provided and preserved.

Her own letters,* and those of her friends and lovers, are the principal sources of information on which this book is based. More specific acknowledgments of obligations will be found in their proper places in the text. It may be mentioned here that the present biographer is able to quote some letters of Chopin to which previous biographers, whether of Chopin or of George Sand, had not access; but that story too is told in the course of the work.

FRANCIS GRIBBLE

* Only a portion—and not the most interesting portion—of George Sand's letters is contained in the six volumes of the Correspondence. The rest are scattered in the columns of various newspapers and magazines. A bibliography of them is given in Madame Karénine's Life.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Ancestors : Frederick Augustus II. : Maurice de Saxe : Marie Rinteau, afterwards de Verrières : Aurore de Saxe : Her marriage with M. Dupin de Francueil : Her life at Nohant : Her son, Maurice Dupin : His marriage with Sophie Delaborde : Birth of George Sand *Pages* 1–7

CHAPTER II

Madame Dupin's inquiries about the past of Sophie Delaborde ; Her reconciliation with her son : Death of Maurice Dupin : Education of George Sand : Her life at the convent : And at Nohant : She consults her confessor about her philosophic studies ; She smokes and rides astride *Pages* 8–15

CHAPTER III

Death of Madame Dupin : Marriage of George Sand to Casimir Dudevant : Her Platonic friendship with Aurélien de Sèze ; How and why that friendship came to an end : Strained relations with her husband : His potations and infidelities : George Sand "takes a violent decision" *Pages* 16–24

CHAPTER IV

George Sand's acquaintance with Jules Sandeau : She goes to Paris and lives with him "in an unconventional manner" : Her literary belongings : Her delight in her emancipation : Her happiness *Pages* 25–33

CHAPTER V

Literary success : A retainer from Buloz : Passionate relations with Jules Sandeau : His infidelity detected : The lovers part : George Sand's retrospective references to the amour *Pages* 34–42

CHAPTER VI

Lost illusions : Friendship with Marie Dorval : Sainte-Beuve introduces Prosper Mérimée : George Sand becomes his mistress for a week : Their parting and subsequent meeting *Pages* 43–47

CHAPTER VII

Alfred de Musset : His family and early associations : His relations with the "Cénacle" : Sainte-Beuve introduces him to George Sand : The exchange of compliments leads to love : Bohemian life together in George Sand's apartment : A honeymoon in the Forest of Fontainebleau : The proposal to travel together to Venice : Musset's mother objects : George Sand calls on her and persuades her to consent : The departure "amid circumstances of evil omen" *Pages* 48–59

CHAPTER VIII

Meeting with Stendhal at Lyons : Arrival at Venice : George Sand works while Musset sits in cafés : Dr. Pagello sees George Sand on the balcony and admires her : She calls him in to prescribe for a headache : Shortly afterwards she summons him again to prescribe for Musset : His diagnosis *Pages* 60–68

CHAPTER IX

The nature of Musset's illness : The reasons for supposing it not to have been typhoid fever : The behaviour of George Sand and Pagello at the bedside : George Sand's declaration of love : Pagello's doubts and hesitations : It is agreed between them that Musset shall return alone *Pages* 69–77

CHAPTER X

How Alfred de Musset was told : His own version of the story : The improbabilities in it : Pagello's version : Musset's departure : His farewell letters *Pages* 78–86

CHAPTER XI

The three-cornered love-duel : George Sand's letters to Musset describing her relations with Pagello : Pagello's letter to Musset : Storms in the "faux ménage" : Remonstrances of Pagello's cast-off mistresses : And of his father : George Sand and Pagello attend public worship and pray together : George Sand decides that Pagello shall take her to Paris *Pages* 87–97

CHAPTER XII

Pagello in Paris : He begins to feel that he has acted foolishly : He consoles himself with the contemplation of his mother's portrait and the recollections of her moral precepts : He walks the hospitals : George Sand sees Musset again : She complains to him that Pagello is jealous : Pagello returns to Venice
Pages 98–107

CHAPTER XIII

Further correspondence between George Sand and Musset : He is ill and asks her to visit him : She wishes to renew the old relations but finds him unwilling : Sainte-Beuve intercedes for her in vain : She cuts off her hair and sends it to Musset : She also sends him her private diary : The renewal of love
Pages 108–116

CHAPTER XIV

George Sand and Musset find life together impossible : They agree to part, and George Sand retires to Nohant : The fate of their letters *Pages* 117–123

CHAPTER XV

George Sand's influence on Alfred de Musset : His moral decline and fall : George Sand's distress : The secret of her strength : She appeals to Saint-Beuve to pray for her *Pages* 124–132

CHAPTER XVI

Michel de Bourges : He acts as George Sand's advocate in a demand for judicial separation from her husband : The hearing of the suit : Speeches of Counsel : Disagreement of the Tribunal : The matter settled out of court : The rights and wrongs considered *Pages* 133–146

CHAPTER XVII

Michel indoctrinates George Sand : His revolutionary harangue on the Pont des Saints-Pères : She becomes a Republican under his influence, and preaches his Gospel in her letters to her boy at school : She becomes Michel's mistress : Relations become strained and they part *Pages* 147–158

CHAPTER XVIII

Maurice Sand at the Tuileries : George Sand's relations with Lamennais : The Saint-Simonians : Their proposal that George Sand should become their high-priestess : Their gifts to her : Her reasons for rejecting their overtures *Pages* 159–166

CHAPTER XIX

George Sand and Liszt : Liszt's elopement with Madame d'Agoult : Friendship of George Sand for Madame d'Agoult : She visits Madame d'Agoult and Liszt at Geneva : They visit her at Nohant : Relations begin to be strained : Practical jokes at Nohant : Eugène Pelletan's experiences as tutor to George Sand's children *Pages* 167–177

CHAPTER XX

Death of George Sand's mother : Solange kidnapped by M. Dudevant : Pursuit and recapture : Letters to Girerd on the waning of the love of Michel : George Sand consoles herself for the loss of Michel's love by becoming the mistress of Félicien Mallefille : She and Madame d'Agoult quarrel about Mallefille : Mallefille supplanted by Pierre Leroux *Pages* 178–186

CHAPTER XXI

Balzac's visit to Nohant : His estimate of George Sand's character : Pierre Leroux dismissed to the empyrean : The origin of the amour with Chopin *Pages* 187–193

CHAPTER XXII

Chopin's early struggles : His sudden success : His proposal of marriage to Marie Wodzinska : The meeting with George Sand and the decision to travel together to Majorca *Pages* 194–200

CHAPTER XXIII

Life in Majorca : The travellers find an apartment in a Carthusian convent in the mountains : Discomfort and demoralisation : Departure : Chopin invites himself to Nohant : George Sand hesitates, but decides that he may come *Pages* 201–210

CHAPTER XXIV

The destruction of George Sand's letters to Chopin : The recovery of Chopin's letters to his family : "Vie rangée" : The Life at Nohant : The verdict of Mlle. de Rozières : "Love is no longer there" *Pages* 211–219

CHAPTER XXV

Reasons for not trusting George Sand's account of the "liaison" with Chopin : Liszt's summary of the situation : "Lucrezia Floriani" : Was "Prince Karol" meant for Chopin ? : Extracts from Chopin's and George Sand's letters to Chopin's sister *Pages* 220–230

CHAPTER XXVI

Solange Sand at school : Her religious instruction : She jilts Fernand de Préaulx and marries Clésinger : Quarrel between Solange and her mother : Quarrels between Chopin and George Sand because he takes the part of Solange : Separation of Chopin and George Sand : Chopin's correspondence with Solange : The references to the rupture in his letters to his sister *Pages* 231–241

CHAPTER XXVII

Chopin's concert tour in England : His return to Paris : His last illness : George Sand refused admission to his apartments : His death *Pages* 242–248

CHAPTER XXVIII

The importance of George Sand's novels : Her relation to the Romantic Movement *Pages* 249–259

CHAPTER XXIX

End of George Sand's sentimental life : Manceau "the last link in the chain" : The affairs of Solange : Her quarrels with her husband : Her separation from him : Solange in Paris : Her correspondence with George Sand *Pages* 260–267

CHAPTER XXX

George Sand grows old with dignity : Her heart a cemetery : The account which she gave of herself to Louis d'Ulbach : And to Flaubert : A conversation at the Magny dinner : "Elle et Lui" : Correspondence with Buloz : His advice to "tone down" that work : "Lui et Elle" : George Sand's rejoinder : She thinks of publishing Musset's letters : Sainte-Beuve's advice : Decision that they shall not be published until after her death

Pages 268–278

CHAPTER XXXI

George Sand's friends and visitors : Théophile Gautier at Nohant : "Ragging" Flaubert : Stories told by M. Henri Amic : Thiers' attempt to kiss George Sand : Jane Essler : Sarah Bernhardt : Why the society of actresses should be avoided : M. Emile Aucante on George Sand's manner of life and methods of work

Pages 279–289

CHAPTER XXXII

Friendship with Flaubert : The correspondence : Criticism of books and criticism of life : George Sand's optimism : Her last illness and death *Pages* 290–298

INDEX *Pages* 299–303

CHAPTER I

Ancestors : Frederick Augustus II. : Maurice de Saxe : Marie Rinteau, afterwards de Verrières : Aurore de Saxe : Her marriage with M. Dupin de Francueil : Her life at Nohant : Her son, Maurice Dupin : His marriage with Sophie Delaborde : Birth of George Sand.

AMANDINE-AURORE-LUCIE DUPIN, known to literature as "George Sand," was the descendant of kings and daughters of the people.

The most distant ancestor to whom we need trouble to trace her is Frederick Augustus II., Elector of Saxony, who was her great-great-grandfather, and is described by his great-great-granddaughter as "the most amazing debauchee" of his epoch. His mistress—or rather, one of his mistresses—was that successful and celebrated courtesan, Aurora von Königsmark. She bore him a child, Maurice de Saxe, the Marshal who won the battle of Fontenoy.

It was not to be expected that Maurice de Saxe would refrain from amours of the kind to which he owed his own agreeable existence; and he did not. When he engaged in a campaign, the followers of his camp always included a company of comedians who served a double purpose, diverting the soldiers by their performances, and providing the commander-in-chief with congenial feminine society. Sometimes, in a chivalrous spirit worthy of the warriors who exclaimed, "Tirez les premiers," he lent his actors—and even his actresses—to the enemy, retaining only his own especial favourite to share his tent.

Among the ladies engaged in one of the companies were Mesdemoiselles Marie and Geneviève Rinteau. D'Argenson bluntly applies to their father a slang term—the name of a fish—which indicates that he lived on the immoral earnings

of his daughters. It is at any rate true that he expected them to push his fortunes as well as their own; and he presently achieved the purpose for which he had sent them to the travelling military theatre. Marie Rinteau found favour in the eyes of Maurice de Saxe, and bore him a daughter. Her father was rewarded with an appointment as manager of a military store. He was afterwards ejected from the post in consequence of a scandal in the commissariat department; but that circumstance is only remotely relevant to the present history.

The career of Marie Rinteau, however, merits more careful contemplation; she may be said to have anticipated her famous great-granddaughter alike in her talents, in her fascinations, and in the licence which she allowed herself in exercising them. Soon after the commencement of her intimacy with Maurice de Saxe, being brought to Paris, she changed her name to de Verrières, and sought and obtained permission to join the troupe of players attached to the royal theatre. One of her motives for doing so must certainly be sought in the fact that, at that period, the actresses enrolled in the royal service were the only women privileged to pursue the profession of gallantry unmolested by the police, all the others being liable to arbitrary arrest at any moment. But Marie de Verrières—to call her by her professional name—differed from the rest in having genuine theatrical ambitions. Merely to "walk on" might suffice for them, but not for her. She aspired to leading rôles; and Marmontel, the author of "Contes Moraux," obliged Maurice de Saxe by giving her lessons in elocution.

The first result of these lessons was that the pupil and the teacher fell in love; the second was that the protector cut off supplies. Marmontel thereupon laid the whole of his fortune

at the lady's feet. She graciously accepted it; but, as it only consisted of forty louis—£32 of our money—it did not satisfy her needs; and it was shortly afterwards intimated to the young author that he must yield his place to the Duc de Bouillon. The son whom Marie de Verrières bore to her new protector was taken away from her to be brought up in its father's house. The father's affection for her cooled, and she was left free to enter into other relations.

M. d'Epinay, the wealthy Farmer-General of the Taxes, husband of the Madame d'Epinay who was the mistress of Grimm, and the friend of Rousseau, next came to her rescue, and, in fact, supported the whole family—a second establishment including a second mother-in-law—first in the Chaussée d'Antin, and afterwards in the country, in the immediate neighbourhood of the house in which Madame d'Epinay resided. He even introduced his mistress and her mother to the curé, who received them as persons of unimpeachable respectability. Madame d'Epinay naturally did not receive them at all; but indirect relations between the two establishments were none the less instituted. M. Dupin de Francueil, who had been the lover of Madame d'Epinay until Grimm supplanted him, became the lover of Geneviève de Verrières.

This episode was ended by M. d'Epinay's bankruptcy, but the fortunes of his mistress were not greatly affected by his failure. She and her sister gave theatrical representations to a large and fashionable attendance at their home, and she continued to fascinate men of mark. She was the mistress of the poet Colardeau; she was the mistress of La Harpe; and she did not survive her charms, but continued to fascinate until the end. Her career of gallantry was too uniformly brilliant to point any useful moral, though it is important

here as a factor in the heredity of George Sand. We will leave it, and pass on to consider the fortunes of her daughter.

Aurore de Saxe was originally registered as the daughter of a "*petit bourgeois*," who was presumably hired, according to the custom of the age, to give her an "*état civil.*" Her father, however, subsequently acknowledged her; and she was taken away from her mother and educated under the superintendence of the Dauphine of France. She was placed at the famous Saint-Cyr school, founded by Madame de Maintenon, and married, at the age of fifteen, to the Comte de Horn, an illegitimate son of Lous XV. Her husband was chosen for her without any pretence of consulting her own wishes; and she was even warned by his valet, on her wedding-day, that the marriage could only be consummated at the peril of her health. The Comte de Horn at first protested; but a threat to refer the question to his own medical attendant induced him to acquiesce. Three weeks afterwards he was killed in a duel, and the child-wife was left a widow.

She returned to her mother, but remained unspotted by the contaminating world in which her mother lived. Her interests were artistic and intellectual; and Marie de Verrières at least conducted her amours in the midst of intellectual society. Presumably the poets and philosophers who found in her their Aspasia respected her daughter's innocence, even while writing madrigals in her honour. At the age of thirty she was married a second time—to the M. Dupin de Francueil already mentioned. There is no reason to suppose that she was aware that he had once been the lover of her aunt.

M. Dupin was a man of culture, and, apparently, a man of wealth. He was acquainted with all the intellectual leaders of the age, and had once even employed Jean-Jacques Rousseau as his secretary. If his wife was never passionately in love with him, at least he did his best to make her happy. Not until after his death did she discover that he had squandered the greater part of his fortune in doing so. On making the discovery, she paid his debts, bought the Nohant estate in the Department of Berry, and settled down there in 1795, to devote her life to the education of her son Maurice.

Maurice Dupin became a soldier. At first a private in Massena's army, he received promotion and became aide-de-camp to Murat; but the only one of his triumphs which immediately concerns us was not won in the field of Mars. One of his generals in the army of Italy was accompanied by his mistress—a grisette named Sophie Delaborde, of whose past the less said the better, already the mother of an illegitimate child called Caroline. Maurice Dupin made love to Sophie. First she lent him the general's money. Then she abandoned the general, and eloped with him. In due course he brought her to Nohant, and announced his intention of marrying her.

Naturally, Madame Dupin was shocked and pained. She was no Puritan. She quite understood that young men would be young men and that young women would be young women. The history of the family, for several generations, had proved that, if it had proved nothing else. It did not outrage her feelings to know that her son, though unmarried, was a father; she had, in fact, already undertaken the education of his natural son, Hippolyte Châtiron. It was little to her that he had taken a new mistress who was expected to bear him a second child. On matters of this sort she was entirely in her

son's confidence, and very much in sympathy with him. But marriage—that was another matter altogether. Her own marriage had brought her social promotion. She was a lady, though a poor lady; her son was a gentleman, though a poor gentleman. A gentleman could not marry a grisette. The proper example for Maurice Dupin to follow was that of his grandfather, Maurice de Saxe.

So Madame Dupin set her face against the marriage. Maurice, she said, must choose between his mistress and his mother; and it is possible that he would have preferred his mother and made terms with his mistress if it had not been for the indiscreet interference of his old tutor, Deschartres, a priest who had unfrocked himself at the time of the Revolution.

This foolish fellow took it upon himself to call upon Sophie at her inn and order her to leave the neighbourhood. Her answer was to order him to leave the room, and he did so; but he presently returned, accompanied by the Mayor and another municipal officer, proposing to procure her expulsion on the ground that her papers were "not in order." To his chagrin, however, the magistrates, discovering no formidable termagant but only a pretty woman in a flood of tears, took Sophie's part, and told Deschartres that he had no right to annoy her. The tutor withdrew in confusion; and presently Maurice arrived, and having heard what had happened, was deaf to further argument. He married Sophie Delaborde in June 1804.

A month later, husband and wife were present at a party given in honour of the betrothal of Sophie's sister, Lucie, to a French officer; and there was fiddling and dancing. Sophie felt suddenly indisposed, and left the room. Lucie followed her; but Maurice continued to dance, noticing and surmising

nothing. Presently he heard his sister-in-law's voice calling, "Come, Maurice! You have a daughter. She has been born in the midst of roses and music. She will be happy."

"She shall be called Aurore, after my mother, who will give her her blessing some day," exclaimed her father; but the world was to know her, not as Aurore Dupin, but as George Sand.

CHAPTER II

Madame Dupin's inquiries about the past of Sophie Delaborde: Her reconciliation with her son: Death of Maurice Dupin: Education of George Sand: Her life at the convent: And at Nohant: She consults her confessor about her philosophic studies: She smokes and rides astride.

MADAME DUPIN the elder was not informed of her son's marriage. She had her suspicions, however, and wrote to the Mayor of the Fifth Arrondissement of Paris to inquire. He assured her that the ceremony had indeed taken place, and that all the necessary legal formalities had been fulfilled. She wrote again to ask whether the Mayor could tell her anything of Sophie's antecedents. She already knew that Sophie had once kept a milliner's shop; and she now learnt that her father sold birds on the Quai de la Mégisserie.

That was interesting, if not exactly satisfactory. But how about Sophie's manner of life? Could the Mayor give an anxious mother any information on that branch of the subject?

He could. He was a very obliging Mayor, and took large views of the obligations of his office. So he instructed a subordinate to devise an excuse for calling upon Madame Maurice Dupin, and to report. The report was to the effect that the young couple were living in extremely modest circumstances, but that their appearance was "decent, not to say distinguished," that they seemed to be devoted to each other, and that there was *no indication*—the Mayor underlined the words—that the husband "had any reason to repent of the union which he had contracted." He ventured, therefore, to appeal to the "maternal heart" to forgive, etc. etc.

And still Madame Dupin was not satisfied. She had it in her mind that the marriage was invalid and could be annulled.

Abbé d'Andrezel, whom she sent to Paris, armed with full powers to act on her behalf, reported, after careful inquiry, that it could not. She disbelieved him, and, going to Paris herself, took counsel's opinion on the matter. There was a consultation at which three eminent lawyers were present. Their joint judgment was that Madame Dupin might go to law if she liked—since one could always go to law about anything—but that the probabilities were ten to one that the Court would declare the marriage valid, and that even if, by some accident, it were upset, her son could, and infallibly would, take immediate steps to regularise the situation.

At last, therefore, Madame Dupin had to admit that she was beaten; and being beaten, she allowed herself to be reconciled to the accomplished fact. At first, though she caressed her grandchild and wept in the arms of her son, she declined to make the acquaintance of her daughter-in-law; but it was not long before she yielded upon that point also. The civil marriage was supplemented by a religious ceremony; and a family feast celebrated the formal recognition of the bride by her husband's family.

About the events of the next few years there is little to be said. Maurice Dupin was with the army which, intended for the invasion of England, was diverted from its purpose by the battle of Trafalgar, and invaded Austria instead. His letters show him looking at life more and more from the point of view of the hardy, matter-of-fact campaigner. Of Venice, for instance, he reported to his wife merely that the water was ugly and the wine was bad. Sophie meanwhile lived with her children in the Rue Grange Batelière, taking them occasionally to visit their aunt Lucie and their Cousin Clotilde at Chaillot. Caroline was presently sent to a boarding-school; but Aurore was kept at home.

After a while, however, Maurice's letters home begin to strike a new note. He resents certain "suspicions"—cruel, of course, and unfounded, and unjust. Sophie, it is evident, was not only bored but jealous, though whether her husband gave her any cause for jealousy it is impossible to say. She decided to follow him to the war, just as she had followed the general, his predecessor. He was with Murat in Spain, so she hired a carriage, and drove all the way to Madrid, where she installed herself and her daughter in the palace allocated to the general staff. Aurore was only three years old, but the officers took notice of her. Murat laughingly called her his little aide-de-camp, and presented her with a uniform. She wore breeches—already—and had spurs on her boots, and carried a toy sword.

Her sojourn in Madrid, however, was very brief. The war was turning badly for the French. Dupont had got into trouble at Baylen, and Murat was called to the throne of Naples. Mother and child had to get into their carriage again and drive back to France, enduring much privation and hardship by the way; they had to eat soup made of candle-ends, and they all contracted an unpleasant skin disease. At last—we are in the year 1808—they reached Nohant, where the elder Madame Dupin welcomed them hospitably. It was there that Aurore made the acquaintance of her natural brother Hippolyte—there also that she suffered her first bereavement. Her father was thrown from his horse, on a dark night, and killed.

Sophie and the little Aurore remained at Nohant, and there ensued a long battle—silent at first, but presently open and avowed—between mother and grandmother for the right to educate and influence the child.

No ideals, points of view, or educational theories could

have been more diametrically opposed than theirs. The grandmother had lived as a great lady, and the mother had kept a small milliner's shop. Scandal could breathe no word to the grandmother's disadvantage; while the mother's past might invite, but decidedly would not bear, investigation. The grandmother had been brought up in eighteenth-century traditions, was proud of her polite accomplishments, had mixed with encyclopædists, and esteemed them; the mother was vulgar, ignorant, and frivolous—a good cook and a capable needlewoman, but quite unfit to move in civilised society. Truly a strange household, bound in the nature of things to be divided against itself!

They soon began to gird at each other in the child's presence. The grandmother talked contemptuously of the manners of "certain persons"; the mother spoke, not less scornfully, of the affectations of "people who considered themselves respectable." Naturally the child, though precocious, could not judge fairly between them. To her it seemed that her grandmother was an unapproachable dignitary to be revered rather than loved. Her mother, who told her fairy tales, and sometimes petted her and sometimes slapped her, was easier to understand. Doubtless she would have preferred her mother, if called upon to make a choice; but the grandmother had the power of the purse, and therefore got her way. It was arranged that the mother should live in Paris, and that the daughter should stay at Nohant, only visiting Paris with her grandmother when the necessities of her education compelled. That was in 1810.

The child at first resented the arrangement, and cried. Indiscreet companions told her that she ought to be happy because her grandmother was richer than her mother, and that, if she were not good, she would be sent to Paris to live

in a garret, and have nothing to eat but beans. The result was to convince her that living on beans in a garret was the most desirable of human lots. That phase passed, however; and the child contentedly lived a curious double life. In her grandmother's salon she met the aristocratic survivors of the old régime, and learnt from them to comport herself with distinction. In her mother's apartment she heard the aristocrats ridiculed as "good-for-nothing idlers." We shall discover traces of both trainings in her career as we proceed.

In 1814 came the entry of the Allies into Paris, and then the grandmother took Aurore precipitately to Nohant, and kept here there for three years. Deschartres was her tutor, and he taught her well enough in the old-fashioned way; but he was also a disciplinarian of the old school, and when the girl grew old enough, she revolted. He had caned her on the hand, and she had submitted; but when he took to throwing books at her head, she decided that, so far as he was concerned, her education was completed. Her real school at this period was indeed what the French call "*école buissonière.*" She rambled in the woods and fields, played with the village children, entered into and realised the life of the Berry peasantry. Physically, mentally, and morally, it was good for her. She stored up "impressions," and at the same time built up that robust health which was to enable her, in later life, to work so hard with impunity.

In 1817 she was confirmed, and received her first communion. Religion was fashionable in France at that date, thanks to Chateaubriand; and even the sceptical conformed, obeying, as it were, some unwritten rule of etiquette. That was the spirit in which the elder Madame Dupin approached the usage, which appears to have had little, if any, spiritual significance either for her or for the communicant. It was

the less likely to have any because the Catholic Church sets its face against that terror of hell fire which the Evangelical saints of the old school used to encourage; and it was not until she went to school in a convent that Aurore Dupin learnt to take religion seriously.

She was at the Couvent des Augustines Anglaises from 1817 till 1820; and her rambling reminiscences relate the most trivial incidents of her life there. First she was a naughty girl, and then she was a good girl; probably she exaggerates both her goodness and her naughtiness. She seems to have combined a passion for amateur acting with a desire to take the veil and pass her life in the exalted self-absorption of the mystic. Perhaps the two aspirations were less contradictory than they appeared: egoism may well be assumed to have been the psychological link between them. Perhaps, too, her confessor perceived as much when he counselled her to be in no hurry to renounce the world. At all events, it must be agreed that he advised her wisely; for imagination boggles at the picture of George Sand as a nun. Assuredly she would have suffered—and not in silence; assuredly she would have revolted—not greatly caring whom she scandalised. One can picture her as the nun in John Davidson's ballad:—

"Sometimes it was the wandering wind,
Sometimes the murmur of a pine,
Sometimes the thought how others sinned,
That turned her warm blood into wine."

She would have "wandered down," one doubts not, in the same way, though to a more brilliant destiny, to the great consternation of the Sisterhood. But the confessor feared and forbade, and the grandmother had other plans.

She tolerated religion on the tacit assumption that, of course, no one really believed in it. Voltaire, she felt, was right, though Chateaubriand was the fashion. So having heard that her granddaughter wished to remain in the convent for ever, she hastened to Paris, and took her away from it at once.

It was then that her real education began. Her mother interfered with it no more than she had interfered with the convent curriculum. Separation from her daughter, indeed, caused Sophie no pangs, and she bluntly declared that she would on no account visit Nohant again until Madame Dupin was dead. The girl, therefore, now sixteen years of age, was entirely in her grandmother's charge; and her grandmother's health was failing. Not only was the old lady too ill to visit Paris: she presently had an apoplectic stroke from which she partially recovered only to lapse into her second childhood. From that time forward, Aurore Dupin was, for all practical purposes, her own mistress.

There were a good many books in the house; so she read prodigiously, and widened her horizon. Rousseau interested her, and so did Chateaubriand. "Le Génie du Christianisme" presented in a new and more worldly light the creed hitherto associated with the stricter precepts of the "Imitatio Christi." She realised that it was possible to be good without being immured; and the desire to be immured subsided, while the Arts began to make their appeal. Aurore Dupin was a musician—a pianist and a harpist; she delighted in poetry and was interested in philosophy. Once, it is true, she wrote to her confessor to inquire whether her philosophic studies were compatible with Christian humility. He doubted, he said in reply, whether they were sufficiently profound to warrant intellectual

pride; and she was reassured, and went on studying. She also acquired the habit of smoking while she studied; but it does not appear that she consulted the confessor about that.

Nor was the use of tobacco her only unconventional indulgence. Her natural brother Hippolyte, now an officer in the army, came home for a visit, and taught her to ride—and even to break horses. She rejoiced in the exercise, dressed as a boy, and rode astride. She was unchaperoned, and there were certain flirtations. Her heart was not engaged, but her behaviour set the neighbours talking. The village curé took it upon himself to admonish her in terms more peremptory than delicate; and she replied by refusing to attend his ministrations. That was her manner of life until her grandmother's death. Keen observers might well have seen in her a young woman whom very little would induce to fling her bonnet over the windmill.

CHAPTER III

Death of Madame Dupin : Marriage of George Sand to Casimir Dudevant : Her Platonic friendship with Aurélien de Sèze : How and why that friendship came to an end : Strained relations with her husband : His potations and infidelities : George Sand "takes a violent decision."

MADAME DUPIN DE FRANCUEIL died on Christmas Day, 1821, having first made her peace with the Church in which she did not believe. She could hardly do less, seeing that there was an archbishop in the family, who was staying in the house at the time. She would not do more, but freely and sceptically criticised the text of the Liturgy while receiving her last communion.

Her fortune amounted to £20,000; and she bequeathed the whole of it, subject to the payment of certain annuities, to her granddaughter. As the girl was still a minor—seventeen years old, in fact—she was to be under the guardianship of René de Villeneuve, her nearest relative on her father's side. This arrangement, however, did not suit the views of her mother, who made a painful scene in the presence of the party assembled, after the funeral, to hear the reading of the will. She was her daughter's natural guardian, she said; she would yield her rights to no one.

Aurore was indignant. She was old enough to understand—she understood—that she was called upon to choose, not only between two individuals, but between two social *milieux*. René de Villeneuve belonged to the old pre-Revolutionary aristocracy. Sophie Dupin was a grisette whom marriage with a gentleman had failed to educate or elevate, and who still remained a grisette in manners, tastes, and interests. Her friends were grisettes like herself, married, when they had married well, to half-pay, out-at-elbows Bona-

partist officers. The two worlds did not mix—and would not. There would be no compromises or concessions—no meeting of the world of the grisettes half-way—in the grandmother's tolerant fashion; no passing to and fro between the one circle and the other. The father's and the mother's families were—and would remain—separate, like the sheep and the goats. Aurore must give up either the one connection or the other.

She would have liked to compromise; but, when she could not, she cast in her lot with her mother. One is bound to respect the instinct on which she acted: a child who acted otherwise would have seemed prematurely hard, lacking in natural affection. But there was no worldly wisdom in it; she got little thanks for it; and—she and her mother being what they respectively were—the decision made disaster of some sort almost inevitable.

It was only in the strict legal sense that Sophie could be her daughter's guardian. She could not advise her, for she could not understand her; she could not even converse with her on any subjects except food and raiment. The child had to think out for herself the problem of arranging her life; and it was a problem which could not be kept waiting; and she was only seventeen and a half. She, the clever pupil of the fashionable Couvent des Anglaises, sharing the home and living under the tutelage of a woman with the manners of a shop-girl and the brains of a bird, felt herself in a situation which would have seemed absurd if it had not been lamentable: a situation, at any rate, from which she must seek the way out as soon as possible. And the most natural way out seemed to lie through marriage.

Her opportunities of marriage were, of course, restricted by her manner of life. She knew hardly any of the right sort

of people—such people as she might have been introduced to by the de Villeneuves; and, among people of that kind, it was at least a question whether the objection to the mother-in-law did not outweigh the attraction of the bride's fortune. Still, the fortune was sure to bring her suitors of a kind—suitors who would at least pass; and in due course it brought Casimir Dudevant, whose acquaintance Aurore Dupin made while on a visit to some old friends of her father's, the Duplessis, of Plessis-Picard, near Melun.

Casimir was the natural son of a Baron Dudevant. He had served two years in the army, and had also been called to the Bar. We who look back on the story can easily see that, whatever his qualities, he was not fit or worthy to be the husband of a woman of genius. He had neither artistic nor intellectual tastes. One may perhaps sum him up by saying that he was a bit of a sportsman, a bit of a farmer, and a bit of a fool; and one knows that that sort of man, far from improving as he grows older, is prone to take to stronger drink and coarser pleasures, in order to cheat the increasing tedium of life. But of course Aurore could not, at seventeen and a half, be expected to think of that. She could no more foresee the Casimir of ten years later than she could foresee her own great mental growth. Her intellectual superiority was masked by the fact that she was ten years his junior. Casimir was good-looking, and made himself agreeable. His family were well-disposed. The Baroness came to call on the grisette. Aurore liked him, and on September 10, 1822, she married him, being then only a little more than eighteen years of age.

Biographers usually pause at this stage to remark that, if Aurore had remained single a little longer, and had then married a better man to whom she was more attached, she

might have lived happily ever afterwards. All that the facts really warrant one in saying is that she would undoubtedly have done her duty if it had coincided with her inclination. The marriage which she did conclude at any rate contained from the first the germs of disintegration. The one mind was expanding, while the other mind was stagnant; to the stagnant mind the expanding mind was bound to become incomprehensible, and its incomprehensibleness was certain to be resented.

Broadly speaking, that is what happened. The wife developed first an artistic temperament, and then artistic gifts. The husband remained a fool, a farmer, and a sportsman, too much addicted to the bottle, too much wrapped up in miserly economies. Presumably he found his wife's cleverness a nuisance. It was an implied criticism of his own stupidity; it made him look and feel foolish. He did not set up for being clever; why should he be perpetually reminded of his limitations? He had supposed himself to be marrying a silly girl who was going to remain silly. This post-conjugal mental expansion was something uncommonly like a breach of contract. At any rate, it made the house exceedingly uncomfortable. And as for the cleverness—well, after all, cleverness was a matter of opinion, and his opinion was as good as another's. So he would seem to have argued. He didn't think his wife's conversation clever—he thought it silly. He told her so, and told her to stop it; and presently he went a little further and boxed her ears. "After that," she says, in her Autobiography, "things proceeded from bad to worse."

Husband and wife, in fact, though there was as yet no avowed and open breach, began to go their several ways. Casimir increased his potations, in which Aurore's natural

brother Hippolyte was his boon companion, and, bored as well as puzzled by a wife who was always "looking for mid-day at fourteen o'clock," sought his "escape from life" in the facile arms of his wife's chambermaid. Aurore, on the other hand, being unable to exchange ideas with a husband who had none, tried to make existence more tolerable by means of Platonic friendships.

The Platonic friend—the first and chief Platonic friend—was Aurélien de Sèze, Advocate-General at Bordeaux, whom she met in the course of an excursion to the Pyrenees in 1825. Casimir frequently went to Bordeaux to do business with a certain Desgranges, a shipbuilder who persuaded him to take £1000 worth of shares in a ship that was never built; Aurore, for her own reasons, accompanied him when she could. She and her friend conversed—and afterwards corresponded—on art, and poetry, and philosophy, and all the other subjects that her husband did not understand. He may justly be said to have helped to educate her. Life derived fresh interests and fresh meanings from the intellectual intercourse.

It was delightful while it lasted, but it did not last long. Two reasons have been assigned for the rupture, and it is likely enough that two causes were operative. It is said that the pure white flame of Platonism failed when Aurélien de Sèze found that the unhappy woman who had wished to be united to him on the plane of chaste and mystic passion bore children to her coarse fool of a husband, just like any other wife; an ideal seemed to have been defiled when, coming to visit her at Nohant, he found that she was *enceinte*. It is possible; but it is also true that their union had, from the first, contained the germs of a spiritual divorce.

Aurélien de Séze was a magistrate—an exceptionally cultivated magistrate, but a magistrate none the less. He

loved literature, and dabbled in philosophy; but formulæ bounded his intellectual horizon. He led his pupil up to them, and then was shocked to see her pass beyond them. Aurélien, in the Revolutionary days to come, was to be a deputy of the Extreme Right: Aurore was to collaborate with the Socialists. Evidently, therefore, the cessation of their harmonious communion of ideas was only a question of time. Passion might have stood the strain, but Platonism could not. "I felt," George Sand wrote, in later years, "that I was becoming a terrible tie for him—or else a mere distraction."

So the tie, without being formally broken, was allowed to break. It would not appear that there was any dramatic sense of quarrel or explanation. Neither of the friends had acquired any rights over the other, and neither could complain of any wrongs. "One is no more justified," George Sand wrote, "in claiming the ownership of a soul than in claiming the ownership of a slave." It was a piece of philosophy which she was to put into more than one novel in the years to come; and she was content to act upon it now. She and her friend must acquiesce in the inevitable and anticipate it, passing quietly out of each other's lives. So she concludes :—

"One must allow man his liberty, and the soul its natural impulses, and leave to God the flame that emanates from God. When this tranquil but irrevocable divorce was accomplished, I tried to continue the existence which had not been modified or disturbed by any external event."

"But that," she proceeds, "was impossible"; and one can easily see why. Not only were things, as she had said, "proceeding from bad to worse"; she had no longer anything

to distract her mind, and prevent her from perceiving that they were doing so.

She was grown up at last. The child-wife had become the brilliant woman—unconventional, original, unhappy, and capable of action. She had really been—or seemed—a child-wife to begin with: hardly distinguishable from the submissive type of woman who, wrapped in small household cares, will accept inebriety, if not too frequent, and infidelity, if not too open, as peccadilloes to be forgiven and forgotten. She had been a devoted mother to her two children—Maurice and Solange; and she had taken herself quite seriously as a *châtelaine*, interested in her humbler neighbours to the point of doctoring their ailments; but her mental and emotional expansion had none the less been continuous. She had read, and was thinking for herself. She had little enough in common with the bibulous squireen, even when he was on his best behaviour; and now his behaviour was deteriorating, as the behaviour of such men nearly always does.

He grew avaricious, and though he was practically living on his wife, grudged her her personal allowance. He sat late with boon companions,—his wife's natural brother Hippolyte, and Stephane Ajasson de Grandsagne, who had sighed for her when she was a child,—and he was not only tiresome in his cups, but coarse, abusive, and indecorous. And he deceived his wife—or rather, he did not deceive her. He had had an "affair" at Bordeaux with the mistress of his swindling partner, Desgranges; at Nohant his amours with the maid-servants were the common talk of the village. One of the maids made a scandal in order to secure provision for her illegitimate child; his wife, on the very morning after the birth of her daughter, overheard him making love to another of them. The strain became intolerable when she

had no longer the exaltation of her mystical Platonic friendship to sustain her. "At last," she says, "it began to get upon my nerves."

The Autobiography does not tell us how the climax was reached, but the Correspondence does.

There was a certain Jules Boucoiran, for whom destiny held in store the editorship of a provincial journal. At the moment he was private tutor in the family of General Bertrand; but he had been for a little while the tutor of Madame Dudevant's boy Maurice. We gather from the letters that he was a good fellow on the whole, though rather an unlicked cub, and that Madame Dudevant had been kind to him, and had admonished him, after the manner of an elder sister. He had had a bad habit of spending his evenings gossiping with the servants in the kitchen, and she had cured him of it. He had learnt to sit in the drawing-room and talk to her instead; and she had come to confide in him, and to address him, when she wrote, no longer as "Monsieur," but as "Mon cher Jules," or "Mon cher enfant." To him, in preference to her mother or any other of her correspondents, she confided that she had "taken a violent decision."

One day, she wrote, she had occasion to look for something in her husband's desk. She found, not what she sought, but a packet addressed to herself, and marked "Not to be opened until after my death." Her relation proceeds:—

"I had not the patience to await my widowhood. No one with such health as mine can rely upon surviving anybody. I assumed my husband's death, and I was very glad to learn what he thought of me during his life. The packet

being addressed to me I could open it without indiscretion, and, my husband being in good health, I could read his last will and testament in cold blood.

"My God! What a will! His maledictions on me, and nothing more. There were all his bad tempers and angry passions, all his reflections on my *perversity*, all his expressions of contempt for my character. And that was what he left me as a pledge of his affection! I thought I must be dreaming—I who, up till then, had kept my eyes shut and refused to see that I was despised. The perusal woke me at last from my slumber. I told myself that to live with a man who neither respected nor trusted his wife would be like trying to raise the dead to life. My mind was made up—and I venture to say *irrevocably*. You know that I do not use that word lightly.

"Without waiting another day, weak and ill though I still was, I stated my wishes, and gave my reasons for them, with a readiness and a *sangfroid* which petrified him. He had not expected that such a creature as I could stand up to him. He grumbled; he argued; he entreated. I remained unmoved. *I must have an allowance*, I said. *I shall go to Paris, and my children will remain at Nohant.*"

CHAPTER IV

George Sand's acquaintance with Jules Sandeau : She goes to Paris and lives with him "in an unconventional manner" : Her literary belongings : Her delight in her emancipation : Her happiness.

PERHAPS Madame Dudevant's decision to go to Paris was not taken quite so suddenly as she gave Jules Boucoiran to understand. Because she confided in him it does not follow that she told him everything; and there must have been a good deal that it was superfluous to tell him because he knew it.

She already had friends at Paris: friends of her grandmother, old schoolfellows—and others. The clever young men of her own neighbourhood went to Paris to seek their fortunes when they grew up. They sought it, for the more part, in the Latin Quarter, and were caught to some extent in the vortex of the Romantic Movement. Pretending to laugh at it, they nevertheless eddied round. They called themselves Hugolaters; and they woke worthy tradesmen from their sleep by bawling satirical refrains about "grocers"; "grocer" being, at that period, the French for a Philistine—an enemy of light.

When they came home for their holidays Madame Dudevant cultivated their society. No doubt it was the most amusing society available for her; and the young men, we cannot question, found her more companionable than the usual and conventional provincial *châtelaine*. Life was not so dull at Nohant but that there occasionally were dances, dinners, and musical evenings, and certain quieter parties at which, according to the fashion of the age, the young people took it in turns to read poetry aloud. It was a faint reflec-

tion of the greater literary life of the capital, and stimulated a desire for it. When the young men were absent, Madame Dudevant corresponded with them in a spirit of gay *camaraderie;* and thus the memory was kept alive, and the desire was further stimulated.

Of course the neighbours talked. They had nothing to do but talk—and very little else to talk about. No doubt the gossips, after the manner of provincial gossips, made a little scandal go a long way; but it is also fairly certain that some material for gossip was furnished. Madame Dudevant was half a Bohemian by birth and upbringing; and if, in her mother's case she had found Bohemianism allied with intellectual darkness, here she found it associated with "the movement," and with new ideas. So it appears that a good deal was based upon certain surreptitious meetings in the woods; and she owns, in one of her letters, to being credited —ridiculously and unjustly—with "four lovers": "not too many, they say," she comments, "for anyone with such lively passions as mine."

Three of the lovers, at all events, may, without hesitation, be struck off the list. Fleury, Duvernet, and Boucoiran were never more than friends. Jules Sandeau was certainly to become more than a friend a little later; but there is no real reason for doubting her own statement that, at this stage, she hardly knew whether she was in love with him or not. She knew his hat by sight, for he used to adorn it with a red cord; and when she visited houses at which she might meet him, she used to look for that hat in the hall. It was a symptom, no doubt, but she did not recognise the significance of it until afterwards. All that she realised, for the time being, was that a circle of friends of whom Jules Sandeau was the most interesting awaited her in Paris whenever she chose

to go there—friends who were in touch with heart and letters, and with whom she could live on terms of Bohemian *camaraderie.* And then the crash came—and the crash was the excuse for her departure.

It was open to her, of course, on leaving her husband, to live a subdued and decorous life, keeping up appearances on three thousand francs a year, pitied and patronised by perfectly respectable people. The censorious may censure her for not doing so if they choose; but they must also admit that, if she had done so, she would not have been George Sand. Her desire was to escape not only from her husband, but from the conventions—to be free, to earn money, to "live," as the modern phrase goes, "her own life." She knew quite well that this involved a sacrifice; that, just as, once before, she had had to choose between her father's and her mother's friends, so now she must choose between the Faubourg and the Quarter. But she made her choice; she abode by it, and she did not regret it.

It was no case of drifting. The act was deliberate, and all those who might consider that it concerned them were formally notified. Madame Dudevant left, as it were, her P.P.C. cards on the Faubourg before taking her departure for the Quarter, making farewell calls upon the sisters at her convent school, and some old schoolfellows who had married and become ladies of fashion. They asked her to come and see them again, and she promised; but she did not mean to come, and they did not expect or desire to see her. For she intended—and perhaps had already begun—to make light of the proprieties. "The proprieties," she wrote to Jules Boucoiran, who was living at La Châtre as her son's tutor, "are the guiding principle of people without soul and virtue. The good opinion of the world is a prostitute, who gives

herself to the highest bidder." Among "people who considered themselves respectable," as her mother would have put it, there was no place for anyone who thus openly outraged the conventions. There was hardly any place for such a one even in the salon of Madame Récamier. Madame Dudevant was invited there, "but had the good sense," she says, "to refuse to go."

The introductions which she valued were those to men of letters who could help her to begin a literary career. One of the introductions was to M. de Kératry, the author of "Le Dernier des Beaumanoir." He was amiable, but they did not suit each other. "I have had enough of him," she wrote. "One must not see celebrities at too close quarters." The other introduction was to Latouche of the *Figaro*. He was neither amiable nor encouraging, but he was helpful. Madame Dudevant had brought manuscripts with her to Paris, and she took them to him. He read them, and his verdict was something less than flattering. The work, he said, "lacked common sense." It needed not merely to be revised, but to be re-written. But he did not, like Kératry, advise her to "make babies instead of books." On the contrary, he laughed when she told him what Kératry had said; and he laughed still more at her reply, "Make them yourself, if you can;" and he took her on the staff of his paper.

It was not much of a post as newspaper posts go: "the lowest of trades" is her own description of the calling, and she speaks of herself as a newspaper mechanic. She sat all day long in the office, and wrote whatever she was told to write—short stories, leaders, humorous paragraphs. It was made clear to her that, however clever she might be, she had

much to learn. Latouche tore up some of her copy, and defaced the rest with his blue pencil. "Ah! if you knew the man!" she exclaims in humorous irritation. And her pay for the copy that survived the blue pencil was only at the scale rate of seven francs a column.

Yet she was happy, and even in high spirits. Her resentment against her husband disappeared in her delight at her emancipation. She did indeed warn Boucoiran to beware of the incalculable vagaries of his temper; but she also corresponded with him amicably about the purchase of a new pair of knickerbockers for the little Maurice, and other matters which concerned them jointly. Since it was a part of their arrangement that she should visit Nohant from time to time to see the children, it was no doubt the better, as well as the more cordial way. Presently she was to fetch Solange; and, in the meantime, she enjoyed herself like a schoolboy out for a holiday, going to see the great actors and to hear the great preachers, exploring the streets, sitting in the cafés, dressing herself like a man, and smoking long cigars.

One does not gather from her letters that she had, as yet, any passionate desire for literary fame. She writes, at all events, that her predominant desire is not for glory but for money; and she professes admiration for the modest and retiring habits of "the great Béranger." Even when she realises that fortune does not favour the anonymous, she is not moved to push her own name forward—the less so because one of the editors to whom she wishes to offer her work is "a woman-hater." So she collaborates, and borrows the name of her collaborator—Jules Sandeau. "A compatriot who has agreed to lend me his name," was her description of him to Latouche.

The name was to become notable thereafter, but it meant little or nothing then. Jules Sandeau was merely a clever young man from the country, intended for the profession of the law, but fully determined in his own mind to follow the profession of letters. He was little more than a boy; to be precise, he was twenty years of age—just seven years younger than Madame Dudevant. But he was in Paris before her, well acquainted with the Quarter, proud to serve as her guide in the land where chaperons are not. He went, Félix Pyat tells us, to meet the diligence on the day of her arrival.

Of course he was in love with her. She was as Bohemian in her affability as a grisette—yet a lady, and a woman of rare intelligence; and she had beautiful eyes, and had shown him certain preferences. Romance could hardly set such a snare for a romantic youth in vain; and the rest followed as a conclusion from its premises. In the country, it may be, he would have been content to love in vain—to sigh humbly and hopelessly at a distance, remembering that he was a mere boy, and that she was a *châtelaine* and a mother. But now they were together in Bohemia—the land of the *faux ménage;* and the followers of Saint-Simon compassed them about, preaching the gospel of free love. Youth is inevitably emboldened in such a case; and it was not long before Jules Sandeau took his courage in his two hands. "I resisted him for six months," says Madame Dudevant; but then she yielded. For a season, broken by intervals in which Madame Dudevant revisited her home, the collaborators lived together. "I lived in my apartment in an unconventional style," is the euphemistic reference to the incident in the Autobiography.

It is an arrangement on which, no doubt, one could pass a moral judgment; but it is hardly worth while to do anything so obvious. What is interesting is not the morality of the partnership, but the motive for it; and on this the Letters throw some light. Madame Dudevant seems to have felt that some such act of open revolt was necessary to her self-respect. She could not endure the humiliating position of the injured wife, pitied by her friends because her husband neglected her and made love to her maids, in her house if not in her presence. It seemed to her that there was more dignity in a compact whereby he went his way and she went hers. Enjoying her liberty, and letting it be known that she enjoyed it, she could not only hold up her head but forget her rancour; and as for the morality of the proceeding, no doubt she looked at it from the Bohemian point of view. She wanted a home-life of a sort, as Bohemians often do, and her own home had been made impossible to her. The step which she was taking might make all the difference to her own happiness, and could not well impair the happiness of anybody else.

So she made the experiment, and it seemed to answer. She and Jules helped each other with their work, and made each other happy. They wrote a novel together, and they wrote novels separately. This was the period of "Rose et Blanche" (by Jules Sand), of "Indiana," of "Valentine," &c., in which Madame Dudevant definitely assumes her new identity as George Sand; and perhaps this is the place in which to quote the eulogy of the charms of his mistress which Jules Sandeau penned in later years. It will be found in "Marianna," written in 1839. The lovers had long since separated—in circumstances to be related presently—when

that romance appeared; but Jules Sandeau had not forgotten.

"She had been brought up in the country," he writes, "and had now for the first time left it; and her manners showed a strange combination of boldness and timidity. Sometimes, indeed, she affected a kind of petulant brusquerie, the result of a secret uneasiness, and an ardour that ran to waste. She had almost a man's familiarity of address, so that it was easy to be intimate with her, but her haughty chastity and her instinctively aristocratic air mingled with her 'abandon' certain suggestions, as it were, of a virgin and of a duchess, contrasting strangely with her disdain for the proprieties and her ignorance of the world. All the evidence revealed in her a richly endowed nature, stirring impatiently beneath the weight of a wealth not yet called into activity. Life—palpitating life—seemed to move among the curls of her beautiful black hair; and there burnt as it were a hidden fire beneath her delicate and transparent skin. The purity of her brow indicated that the storms of passion had not yet broken upon that noble head; but the expression of her eyes, burning, yet weak and tired, spoke of terrible interior struggles, ceaseless but unavowed."

That was the retrospect—the bitter, yet lingering and longing recollection of charms that were no more for him. One easily infers from it the intoxicating happiness of the days before dispute and disillusion; and of George Sand's happiness her letters give irrefragable testimony. She writes to Duvernet:—

"How I wish I could impart to you this sense of the intensity and joyousness of life that I have in my veins and in my breast. To live! How sweet it is, and how good, in spite of annoyances, husbands, boredom, debts, relations, scandalmongers, sufferings, and irritations! To live! It is intoxicating! To love, and to be loved! It is happiness! It is heaven!"

CHAPTER V

Literary success : A retainer from Buloz : Passionate relations with Jules Sandeau : His infidelity detected : The lovers part : George Sand's retrospective references to the amour.

WE have seen that George Sand—we need no longer speak of her as Madame Dudevant—was happy. She was also, though not yet famous or rich, beginning to be successful.

Her note was new to fiction. She wrote enthusiastically of illicit love, picturing it under the benevolent protection and patronage of the Divine Providence which overrules all things for good. Though she held somewhat aloof from the Saint-Simonians on the ground that the priestess of the sect was chiefly anxious to "show off her sky-blue frock and her swan's-down boa," she nevertheless preached free love in the name of true religion. "In George Sand," a cynical critic has written, "when a lady wants to change her lover, God is always there to facilitate the transfer." But though cynics might mock at that sort of thing, there was a public for it. The authoress was soon able to tell her friends that the leading reviews were "fighting for" her serials; and she presently accepted from the great Buloz, of the *Revue des deux Mondes*, a retaining fee of £160 a year.

She continued to divide her time between Paris and Nohant—between her lover's apartment and her husband's country house. Her son remained in the country with his tutor; but she had Solange with her in Paris when she could. Those who disapprove most strongly of her conduct cannot deny that she was as devoted a mother as the circumstances of the case allowed. Her letters to the elder child are full not only of affection but of admirable precepts; she was never

more happy than when taking the younger one to see the wild beasts at the Jardin des Plantes. Her life might be at the beginning of a tangle not easily to be unravelled; but there were certain old-fashioned virtues to which she clung, and would always continue to cling. Her instincts, in these regards, were invariably sound; and as we shall have frequent occasion to see as we proceed, she always loved to preserve—and even to create—the atmosphere of the home in the midst of her most Bohemian escapades.

Of the nature of her relations with her husband at this stage something has already been said. We find, as it were, a *locus classicus* concerning them in one of her letters to her mother. "It is only fair," she writes, "that the great liberty which my husband enjoys should be reciprocal. Otherwise he would seem odious and contemptible to me—and that he does not desire." And Casimir Dudevant endorses this view of the situation in a letter in which he tells his wife that he is about to visit Paris. "I shall stay," he says, "with Hippolyte, because I do not wish to interfere in any way with your liberty, or to have any restrictions imposed upon my own—which seems a fair arrangement."

So they agreed to differ, and corresponded amicably, about Maurice's knickerbockers and similar matters, and met from time to time without violating the truce or seeking to upset the *modus vivendi* that they agreed upon. George Sand wrote to her husband about the plays she saw and the editors she interviewed, and expressed concern for his health when he was summoned to sit on a jury in a town in which cholera was raging. For the rest, she regarded him as a man like another, to be observed and put into a book. He evidently sat unconsciously as the model for the disagreeable husband in "Indiana." Her heart—which had been agreed should be

her own—was in the Latin Quarter, with her student-lover, Jules Sandeau. For the first time in her life she believed that she knew what love really was. In one of her letters we find her distinguishing between love and passion: "Love seeks to give, whereas passion only seeks to take." She had given herself to Jules Sandeau—as she believed, for ever.

In this, as in all her love affairs, she had a confidant; and the confidant, as always, was a man. She told the whole story of her love at the time, in a series of letters to Emile Regnault, printed in the *Figaro* by M. Amic in 1896. It was to Regnault that she confided her habit of looking on hat-stands for Jules Sandeau's red-corded hat, the cords on the hats of her other friends and acquaintances being blue; and she also told him in what circumstances Jules Sandeau declared his love, and so made her aware of hers.

"I don't know exactly how it happened. A quarter of an hour previously I had been alone, sitting on the steps of the stone staircase, with a book in my hands which only my eyes were reading. My mind was absorbed by a single thought, intensely delightful, but mysterious and vague. I seemed to see Jules, and to hear his voice; I was thinking over everything that I had heard said about him, and everything that I had guessed about him; and my heart was consumed with love for him, while to my mind there came no thought whether of yielding or of resistance. The future? The morrow? I knew nothing about that. He had arrived on the previous evening, and my whole life was concentrated upon that day. All of a sudden a voice sounds in my ear, and makes me tremble from head to foot. I turned round, and there he was. I was not in the least expecting him. But what is all this that I am telling you? Jules, I doubt

not, has described the scene to you a hundred times in its smallest details. Lovers are so tiresome, aren't they?"

It was a strange confidence truly for a woman to make to a man; but there were stranger confidences to follow. The veil of the alcove is lifted; and we read of George Sand's motherly anxieties for the well-being of a too ardent lover.

"You must understand, my dear Emile, that my life is very closely bound up with that of Jules, and that when he suffers, however little, I, in sympathy, suffer much. You still have some influence over him, whereas I have none. I tire him, and I cannot bring myself to tell him that I am ill, in order to persuade him to take care of himself. That remedy would be worse than the disease. Look at his letter to me, and look at my reply. I am very guilty towards him; I have been very cruel. I reproached him for his idleness when he was well; I reproach him for his illness now that he is ill. I tire him, I irritate him, and I annoy him. I feel it, and I am very unhappy about it. He will not admit it, but he finds me an oppressive burden."

An oppressive burden in what sense? In a very literal sense, as the next letter explains.

"One feels horribly uneasy, my friend,—one feels a frightful remorse,—when one sees the being to whom one would gladly give one's life dying in one's arms; when one sees him growing thin and exhausted—pining away from day to day—and feels that one is killing him, that one's caresses are a poison, and one's love is a consuming fire: a fire that devours and destroys, leaving nothing but ashes behind. It is an appalling thought: and Jules will not understand it. He

laughs at it. He despises it as a child's nightmare; and when, in the midst of his transports of delight, the idea comes to me and freezes my blood, he tells me that that is the death that he would like to die. At such moments he promises whatever I bid him promise. He makes the promise as he falls asleep, exhausted with fatigue, and when he wakes up in the morning he has forgotten all about it. A hundred times during the past three months, I have held him almost fainting in my arms, and have resisted him. Then I yielded to my fears in the hope of curing him. I made the sacrifice of my will—my will which, after all, is a thing of some account—and to-day I lament having done him more harm by devotion than by my resistance. I am killing him. The pleasures which I give him he buys at the cost of his life. I am his Peau de Chagrin."

The next letter shows that George Sand was giving Jules Sandeau not only herself but her money. Her rule is proved by the exception to it which she notes. She is at Nohant, this time, and he is in Paris. She fears that he has not enough to eat. He has a delicate stomach; and it may be that he is "breakfasting off Roquefort cheese." And then: "I haven't been able to send him any money this month, as I have had to devote my month's allowance to the payment of a debt."

Such was the romance; and George Sand indulged the dream that it would last for ever. But such passionate romances seldom last; and the end of this one came with dramatic suddenness.

George Sand set out one day from Nohant to Paris without announcing her arrival, meaning to give her lover the pleasure of a surprise. She surprised him indeed—but not alone. With him—and not only with him but actually in his arms—

was a young woman whom the chroniclers describe as "*une blanchisseuse quelconque.*"

No doubt it was an infidelity of the senses rather than the heart: no deliberate betrayal, but rather the temporary aberration of a young man to whose passionate temperament she had just borne such eloquent witness. If only she had not left him for so long! If only he had dared to hope that she would come again so soon! Those are the excuses which one pictures him preferring. But, if he did prefer them, it was in vain. The offence was not of the kind that could be pardoned; and Emile Regnault was presently informed of the rupture.

"DEAR FRIEND,—I have just written to M. Desgranges to give notice to terminate the tenancy of Jules' apartment, and to ask him for a receipt for the rent due, which I will pay. . . .

"I am taking the rest of my furniture to my own rooms. I will make a parcel of the few things which Jules has left behind him in the drawers, and have them sent to you; for I desire to have no interview, and no communication, with him on his return, which, as I gather from the last words of his letter to you, which you showed to me, is likely to, or at any rate may, take place at an early date. I have been too deeply wounded by the discoveries which I have made about his conduct to preserve for him any other sentiment than an affectionate compassion. Do all that is necessary to make him understand that nothing can reunite us in the future. If that is unnecessary—if Jules, that is to say, already understands the situation—spare him the pain of being told that he has lost even my esteem. I doubt not that he has lost his own, and that is sufficient punishment for him."

So the passionate lovers parted, and pursued thenceforward

separate roads to fame. Jules Sandeau became an Academician—the first novelist to whom the Academy opened its doors. It is said that, in that capacity, he voted against a proposal to award George Sand a literary prize.* It is also said that, until the end of his days, the mention of her name always brought tears to his eyes. But he had other mistresses —George Sand's friend Marie Dorval, the actress, among the number—so that it is difficult to be sure. And, at any rate, he uttered one witticism at her expense which has lived. "My heart is a cemetery," George Sand said pathetically, in her later years; and the saying was repeated to Jules Sandeau. "It is a necropolis," was his comment.

George Sand, on her part, as we shall see, could forget, if she could not forgive; but she would not have been George Sand if she had not first published her emotions to the world. Her regrets, such as they were, may be read in the "Lettres d'un Voyageur."

"Growing old matters little to me; but it matters much to me that I should not grow old in solitude. Only I have not met the human being in whose company I could live and die; or, if I have met him, I have not been able to keep him. Listen to a story and cry over it. Once upon a time there was a worthy artist called Watelet, the best etcher of his time. He loved Marguerite Lecomte, and taught her to etch as well as he did. She left her husband, her wealth, and her country, to live with Watelet. . . . The world cursed them, and then, as they were poor and modest, the world forget them. Forty years later there was discovered, in a little house in the suburbs

* M. de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, in "La véritable Histoire de 'Elle et Lui,'" corrects this story, and shows that Sandeau was absent, through indisposition, from the session at which the vote was taken.

of Paris, called Moulin-Joli, an old man who etched on copperplate, together with an old woman, whom he called his '*meunière*,' who sat at the same table with him, and worked at the same task. The first idle loafer who discovered this marvel told the others about it, and the world of fashion crowded to Moulin-Joli, crowded to see the phenomenon : a love that had lasted for forty years ; a labour that had always been assiduous and had always given delight ; two twin talents, Philemon and Baucis, contemporaries of Mesdames de Pompadour and Du Barry. That seemed an epoch-making spectacle ; and the marvellous couple were surrounded by friends, flatterers, and admirers. Fortunately they died of old age a few days afterwards ; otherwise the incursion of the world would have spoilt the picture. The last picture which they engraved was of Marguerite's house, and had the motto—

'Cur valle permutem Sabina
Divitias operosiores !'

"I have that picture in my room. It hangs above a portrait of some person whom none of us here know. For a whole year he who bequeathed me that portrait used to sit with me every evening at a little table, engaged at the same work as myself. In the mornings we used to consult together about our tasks, and in the evenings we sat at the same little table and supped together, talking the while of our art, our sentiments, and our future. The future did not keep its promises to us. Pray for me, O Marguerite Lecomte !" *

This, it is clear, is sentimentalism rather than sorrow. If

* Dr. George Brandes has maintained that the reference is to George Sand's relations, not with Sandeau, but with Musset. The view presented here is that taken in the "Grand Dictionnaire Larousse."

George Sand's heart was a cemetery, she was already beginning to find satisfaction in her meditations among the tombs. If the memory remained, it lay at the bottom of a heap of memories; and there is a picture belonging to a somewhat later date in which we see recollection still more dim, if not altogether extinct. It is M. Jules Claretie who tells the story :—

"One evening, in the editorial office of the *Revue des deux Mondes*, a bald little man, of military bearing and pensive manner, collided in the doorway with a fat lady with the dark complexion of a gipsy, and apologised to her politely.

"'I beg your pardon, madam.'

"'I beg yours.'

And then, when Sandeau had taken his seat—

"'Who is that lady?' he asked.

"'What?' was the answer. 'It is you who ask that question! Why, that is George Sand!'"

And thus, just as in one of Maupassant's short stories, the curtain falls upon an anti-climax.

CHAPTER VI

Lost illusions: Friendship with Marie Dorval: Sainte-Beuve introduces Prosper Mèrimèe: George Sand becomes his mistress for a week: Their parting and subsequent meeting.

ILLUSIONS were now vanishing. The first illusion had gone when Aurélien de Sèze ceased to be satisfied with a love that was merely mystical and chaste; the second when Jules Sandeau preferred—albeit only for a moment—the embraces of his "*blanchisseuse quelconque.*"

It is our English convention not to take seriously the sufferings of lovers whose union has not been blessed by the Church—or at least sanctioned by the Registrar: we prefer to denounce or to deride. It is the French convention to regard these tragedies as the most poignant of all. But the truth is that love is love, and is to be taken seriously—as by the lovers it always is taken seriously—in proportion not to its sanction but to its sincerity. George Sand when Jules Sandeau deceived her, felt herself, for the moment, emotionally bankrupt. "And I had for my most intimate friend," she adds, in explanation of her further conduct, "a woman who put no bridle on her passions."

The friend was Marie Dorval, the actress already mentioned. George Sand had written her a letter of homage, soliciting her acquaintance; she had responded with enthusiasm; the two women had formed an attachment. And Marie Dorval was no exception to the rule that the theatre is a bad school of morals. She was the more dangerous as a friend—the more likely to be imitated as a model—because she was no mercenary mistress, but the child of impulse and caprice. In the years to come, she was not only to be the mistress of Jules Sandeau, but to break the noble heart of Alfred de

Vigny. "On the bosom of what a Magdalen fall the tears of this Christ!" was to be the cynic's comment upon that singular passion. A strange counsellor truly for a distinguished woman of letters; and one can imagine what her counsel would have been: to make haste to love again—recklessly, and without discrimination.

We cannot doubt that the advice was given; and we know that it was taken. To friends in the country George Sand wrote that, in the daytime, she was besieged by visitors, and that in the evening she shut herself up "with my pens and my ink, Solange, my piano, and my fire." It was a part of the truth—for she was writing "Lélia"—but not the whole of it. The friends who besieged her, and who, she said, did not amuse her, included men who were anxious to make love, and men who thought to do an act of kindness in introducing lovers. She knew, of course, all the members of the *Revue des deux Mondes* group. Among them was Sainte-Beuve, the critic, who introduced Prosper Mérimée, the novelist. "She gave herself to Mérimée," says her biographer, Madame Karénine, "without knowing exactly why."

It was a brief episode concerning which some strange and not specially seemly anecdotes have been related. Mérimée himself spoke of the affair as a young man's "adventure." The story also went the rounds that Sainte-Beuve, distressed to see George Sand lonely and forsaken, and aspiring to fill the place in her life which God, according to the cynic, fills in her novels, "gave" Mérimée to her, and that she wrote to him on the following morning requesting him to take back his gift. She herself, in a letter to Sainte-Beuve, declared than the intimacy lasted a whole week; and she, if anyone, was in a position to know. But the point is not worth arguing. The three versions have their common denomina-

tor in the fact that George Sand and Prosper Mérimée quickly discovered that they did not suit each other. "All that is certain," says M. Augustine Filon, in his Life of Mérimée, "is that he refused to be led along the road that Musset followed, and that he was wise."

He was a little older than George Sand in point of years —a great deal older in knowledge of the world; and he was the type of man who has a special fascination for a certain type of women. His distinction was his reserve—worn like a mask which he seemed always on the point of removing. It was permissible to credit him with many adorable qualities which he did not actually display. Apparently he was an iceberg; but it was possible to believe that the iceberg was a volcano in disguise. So George Sand who had resisted Sandeau before yielding to him, yielded to Mérimée without resistance: and, after it was all over, she wrote to Sainte-Beuve to tell him how it had happened, and why.

She felt herself growing old, she said, and yet, in some ways, she was still young. She suffered, she despaired, and she was bored. She was ready even to drown herself, believing that life had no longer any happiness—or even any pleasures—to offer her. And then—

"On one of my days of *ennui* and desperation, I met a man who was free from all doubts and questionings—a calm and a strong man—who understood nothing of my nature, and only laughed at my troubles. The force of his character completely fascinated me, and for a week I believed that I had acquired the secret of happiness—that he would teach it to me, and that his scornful disdain would heal me of my childish susceptibilities. I believed that he had suffered as I had suffered, and made himself master of his sensibilities. . . .

"This man, who would only be my lover on one condition, and who was able to make me desire his love, persuaded me that there might still exist for me a kind of love endurable to the senses and intoxicating to the soul. I had thought so myself once . . . and I was suffering from that romantic restlessness and weariness which make one giddy, and cause one to question all one's negations, and fall into fresh errors far graver than those one has forsworn. So, after having thought that years of intimacy could not link my existence to another's, I concluded that a fascination which had only lasted a few days might determine the course of my life. And, in the end, I did, at the age of thirty, what a girl of fifteen would have known better than to do. Courage! The rest of the story is odious to relate; but why should I fear to be ridiculous, if I have not been guilty?

"The experiment failed completely. I shed tears of pain, disgust, and discouragement. Instead of an affection that could pity me and relieve me of my distress, I found only a bitter and mocking frivolity. That is all."

That is the end of the confession; and the story has hardly any sequel. The lives of these lovers of a week were to run on very different lines. While George Sand remained a Bohemian, Mérimée was to become a public official and a courtier—Inspector of Historical Monuments, and Napoleon's Master of the Revels at Compiègne. He was to have other love affairs, of which one at least is famous—too proud to marry Jenny Dacquin, the provincial notary's daughter, but not too proud to dally with her interminably, always seeming about to depart from his reserve, and never quite departing from it. But he and George Sand were only to meet once more—at a dinner party given in Paris by Lord

Houghton in 1848—when, Mérimée says, they stared at each other a good deal, but did not speak. For the rest, he voted with the minority, that she should have the Academy Prize of 20,000 francs, and even canvassed Jules Sandeau on her behalf.

But now another illusion was gone; and the rejected heart was once more ready to be caught on the rebound. In Sainte-Beuve's Memoirs there is a statement that Gustave Planche—the dramatic critic of the *Revue des deux Mondes*, whom Victor Hugo described as "a fungus not afraid of being bitten because it knows that it is poisonous,"—was, for a time, her lover; but, in one of her own letters to the critic, the allegation is denied. "He is not my lover," she writes, "and he never will be;" and she was ordinarily so frank in her confessions that we need make no difficulty about believing her.

Moreover, a greater than Gustave Planche was about to enter into her life. She was on the point of meeting Alfred de Musset.

CHAPTER VII

Alfred de Musset : His family and early associations : His relations with the "Cénacle" : Sainte-Beuve introduces him to George Sand : The exchange of compliments leads to love : Bohemian life together in George Sand's apartment : A honeymoon in the Forest of Fontainebleau : The proposal to travel together to Venice : Musset's mother objects : George Sand calls on her ana persuades her to consent : The departure "amid circumstances of evil omen."

ALFRED DE MUSSET was not, like George Sand, of miscellaneous lineage. His family was noble—*ancien régime* to the finger-tips ; and many members of it had dallied in a dignified way with literature. His father, M. de Musset-Pathay, had written several books, including what was then the standard Life of Rousseau, whose character he defended against the assaults of Grimm. His great-uncle, the Marquis de Musset, was the author of a novel, announced in the preface as "dictated by the love of virtue." A maternal grandfather, M. Guyot-Desherbiers, had published a humanitarian poem on cats.

He was a clever boy, nervous and delicate ; accord ng to some accounts he was epileptic, but that statement has been disputed. At all events, he was impatient and precocious—already a poet to be taken seriously at the age of seventeen, afflicted by the *maladie du siècle.* One may smile, remembering what Shakespeare says about the young men who are "sad as night only for wantonness" ; but the disease was real enough. It was, so to say, the mental epidemic of the period. The sanest critics have traced its causes and chronicled its symptoms. France had been bled almost to death by the slaughter of the Napoleonic wars, and the starved nerves of a whole nation had been overstrained.

There followed reaction, breakdown, hysteria; and the hysteria was aggravated by the French system of education. The *Lycée* was a forcing-house; and there were no outdoor games to help youth to preserve its emotional and mental balance. The result was pessimism, and the attempt to make pessimism tolerable by dissipation. Since Musset's testimony might be prejudiced, let Maxime du Camp be our witness.

"The literary and artistic generation," he writes, "which preceded me—the generation to which I belonged—passed a youth of lamentable melancholy: a melancholy which had no cause and no immediate motive, but was inherent in the individual and the age." Young men, he adds, were haunted by the idea of suicide. "It was not merely, as might be supposed, a fashion. It was a kind of general feeling of feebleness which saddened the heart, darkened the mind, and caused men to look upon death as a deliverance." And when men did not seek the escape from life in death, they turned to anodynes—to literature, and also to drunkenness and free love. To Alfred de Musset each of the three anodynes was to make its appeal in turn.

Those were the days of the "Cénacle": those gatherings of young poets hardly out of their teens, who had Victor Hugo for their prophet and Sainte-Beuve for their trumpeter. Alfred de Musset, the youngest of them all, was introduced to the group by Hugo's brother-in-law, Paul Foucher, who had been at school with him. "I also am a poet," he confided to the companion with whom he walked home after he had, for the first time, heard his elders recite their compositions; and presently he too recited, and was acclaimed the "sublime child" of the Romantic company. Lamartine remarked on his eyes, "dreamy rather than dazzling," and on

his "modest silence in the confused tumult of jabbering women and poets." Victor Hugo speaks of "his firm clear glance, his dilated nostrils, his vermilion lips half open."

It would seem that he was rather in the group than of it. The others were the professionals; he was the amateur. They were the Bohemians; he was the fine gentleman—the "dandy" some of them said—who descended into Bohemia at his hours. He never became the typical Romantic writer, having his own traditions, his own point of view. But the new associations at least made a bourgeois profession impossible for him. For a little while he studied law, and then, for a little while, he pretended to study medicine; but medicine disgusted and law bored him. He "cut" his lectures, and spent his time on the boulevards; but, instead of making literature his excuse, he justified himself with a cynicism. Man was such a poor insignificant creature, he told his puzzled family, that it was absurd to take pains to fashion himself into "a particular kind of man."

That was his position—and his age was only twenty-two—when he made the acquaintance of George Sand, to whom he was introduced by her "confessor," Sainte-Beuve.

Perhaps Sainte-Beuve was anxious to make amends for his mistake in introducing Mérimée. At all events, we find him pressing the introduction, and George Sand only accepting it with reluctance. She had had enough, she said—and perhaps believed—of love. It no more became her than roses became a brow of sixty winters. "For the last three months it has not tempted me in the least." Moreover, if Sainte-Beuve insisted upon introducing somebody, there were other men whom she was more anxious to meet.

"After due reflection, I would rather that you didn't bring Alfred de Musset to see me. He is too much of a dandy; we shouldn't suit each other: I was rather curious about him than interested. It is imprudent to gratify all one's curiosities, and better to follow the guidance of one's sympathies. Instead of him, I should like you to bring Dumas, in whose art I find soul as well as talent. He has said that he would like to meet me—you have only to give him my message."

One is amused at the preference thus expressed, and tries to picture the *liaison* that might have resulted. Alexandre Dumas was a man who liked to fill his house with mistresses, but refused to take any of them seriously, first treating them like spoiled children and then like naughty children. In his intellectual life they had no part or lot. He tolerated them until he quarrelled with them, submitting in patience to be plundered; but, in the end, he always flew into a volcanic passion, and bade them, at a few minutes' notice, begone and take their bedroom furniture with them. There would indeed have been a strange conflict between two strong natures if he and George Sand had ever loved.

The speculation is idle, however, since it was not Dumas but Musset who was introduced. The exact date of the first meeting cannot be fixed;* but Musset and George Sand sat next each other at a dinner given to the contributors to the *Revue des deux Mondes* in the late spring or early summer of 1833. "She asked him to call," says Paul de Musset in his

* The story is told—Dr. Brandes repeats it—that Buloz deliberately brought them together in the confident expectation that they would fall in love and would quarrel, and that their disputes would "make copy" for the *Revue*. Whether the story be true or not, it does not seem to rest upon very solid evidence.

Life of his brother. "He called two or three times, at intervals of a week, and, after that, he was always with her."

They began, of course, with literary compliments. Musset wrote some verses in praise of "Indiana," and sent them to the author. In the covering letter, he proposed to escort her to the towers of Notre Dame, which she had expressed the desire to climb. That excursion does not seem to have taken place; but Musset was given an early copy—or perhaps the proofs—of "Lélia," and though his letter of acknowledgment is not a love letter, it indicates that progress towards intimacy is being made. "A sea rolls between us," says the young man. He must not ask for love, and friendship is "too moral" for him. But may he not be "a kind of comrade without importance and without rights—consequently without jealousies and without quarrels, capable of smoking your tobacco, and catching cold with you while philosophising under the shadows of all the chestnut trees of modern Europe?"

So far, it is only the tone of badinage; and we find the same tone in the dedication written by George Sand in the presentation copy of "Lélia" which she sent to him. In the first volume she wrote: "To my naughty boy, Alfred!—GEORGE." In the second the inscription was: "To M. le Vicomte Alfred de Musset, with the respectful homage of his devoted servant, George Sand." And, after that, the situation developed rapidly. Alfred de Musset made a declaration of love in a letter, and George Sand hesitated. He made a second, and more passionate declaration: "Pity me, but do not despise me. If my name is written in a corner of your heart, do not efface the impression, however faint and feeble it may be. . . . There are days when I could kill myself. I weep instead, or laugh—but I do not

laugh to-day. Good-bye, George. I love you with the love of a little child." To this appeal George Sand yielded, and the poet burst into song :—

"Te voilà revenu dans mes nuits étoilées,
Bel ange aux yeux d'azur, aux paupières voilées,
Amour, mon bien suprême et que j'avais perdu !
J'ai cru pendant trois ans te vaincre et te maudire,
Et toi, les yeux en pleurs, avec ton doux sourire,
Au chevet de mon lit te voilà revenu.

Eh bien ! deux mots de toi m'ont fait le roi du monde.
Mets la main sur mon cœur, la blessure est profonde ;
Elargis-la, bel ange, et qu'il en soit brisé !
Jamais amant aimé, mourant pour sa maîtresse,
N'a, dans les yeux plus noirs, bu la céleste ivresse,
Nul, sur un plus beau front ne t'a jamais baisé."

A period of happiness, and of Bohemian merriment, succeeded. Nominally Alfred de Musset was still living at home with his mother, his brother Paul, and his sister Herminie, afterwards Madame Lardin de Musset ; but he spent most of his time as George Sand's guest, and only came home occasionally. There was no secret as to the nature of their relations. They entertained their Bohemian friends. Buloz, Gustave Planche,* Jules Boucoiran, and Papet were often there. Paul de Musset was in the habit of looking in to see how the lovers were getting on. One hears of supper parties, and practical jokes. A comedian and conjurer was introduced as a distinguished European diplomatist, and imposed upon all who were not in the secret until, at dessert, he began to spin plates to illustrate

* For many years the dramatic critic of the *Revue des deux Mondes*.

the complications of European politics. The poet himself assumed the disguise of a maid-servant, and spilt soup on the heads of the guests. He also—being an artist as well as a poet—caricatured the company, drawing a cartoon of himself in particular as "Don Juan trying to borrow half a franc"; and he celebrated the receptions in some doggerel verses, discovered among his papers after his death, and recently published by M. Maurice Clouard. As they are only doggerel, and not poetry, one may venture upon an English version of a few of the stanzas :—

"Amid pots of mignonette,
In her salon near the sky,
George smokes a cigarette,
With a tear-drop in her eye.

Buloz sits on the ground,
His best respects to pay;
Solange behind is found,
Writing a book in play.

As solemn as a stone,
Boucoiran, splashed with dirt,
Remarks with mournful tone
Musset's unbuttoned shirt.

Menard, with muddy shoes,
Of speech is far more free;
Paul listens to his views,
While pouring out the tea.

Planche, who was drunk last night,
Hides in a corner now,—
A sorry, sorry sight . . ."

But the rest of the verse about Gustave Planche is too offensive to be quoted; and thereby hangs a tale.

Gustave Planche had never been George Sand's lover, but he had hoped to be, and he had an old-standing quarrel with Alfred de Musset. They had met at a ball, and there had been jealousy, and an attempt at a mean revenge. The critic had accused the poet of kissing his partner—the most shocking of all offences in the eyes of those French people who are not Bohemians. Challenged to substantiate the charge, he had had to admit that it was a calumny. The anger of an angry father had been diverted from the poet's head to his; the angry father had laid a stick about his shoulders; and the only redress open to him had been to review the poet unfavourably. And now the poet crossed his path again. He glared, but he had to go. It was in vain that he tried to establish himself in George Sand's favour by challenging the critics who spoke unkindly of her fiction. She hardly thanked him, and other people laughed at him; and so he passes out of our story.

He was clever enough, but a plebeian. Alfred de Musset was cleverer, and an aristocrat—refined, though a debauchee—dissolute only through hysteria—too young for his dissipations to have set any ugly mark on him. Gustave Planche, no doubt, was not the only man who seemed vulgar beside him. He was a "sublime child"—not less handsome than distinguished; and George Sand, in loving him, felt that she had once more plunged into happiness. Her letters to Sainte-Beuve leave us in no doubt about that.

"I have fallen in love—very seriously this time—with Alfred de Musset. It is not a caprice, but a genuine attachment. . . . I have loved before—once for six years, and once for three years—and what I am capable of now I do not know. Many fancies have traversed my brain. But my

heart was not so worn out as I had feared. I say that because I feel it.

"I felt it also when I loved P[rosper] M[érimée]. He repelled me, and I had to make haste and recover. But now, instead of being pained and misunderstood, I find a candour, a loyalty, and a tenderness which cause me intoxicating delight. It is a young man's love and a comrade's friendship—something that I had never dreamt of and never expected to encounter—least of all from him. I denied this affection, at first, and repelled it, and refused it; but then I yielded, and I am happy through having done so.

"Yes, I am happy. Thank God for me. True, I have my hours of suffering and vague melancholy. That is in me, and a part of me. But I am in the path of recovery and consolation. Do not dissuade me from this belief."

And then a month later :—

"My friend, I am happy, very happy. Every day finds me more attached to him; every day, the trifles that used to make me suffer vanish from my life; every day, the beautiful things of life that I used to admire shine for me more brilliantly. And then, besides all his other qualities, he is such a 'good fellow.' His intimacy is as delightful to me as his love for me was precious. After all you see, there is nothing really good in the world but that."

An idyll truly! And what more natural than that the lovers should feel that their love required the consecration of a honeymoon?

Biographers have said that they fled from Paris in order to escape from Paul—that guardian angel of an elder brother who was so fond of looking in to see how they were getting

on. It may be so; but it is hard to believe that Paul was the only caller whose visits seemed an intrusion on their happiness. All the old friends must have been more or less in the way; and too many of them remained even when Gustave Planche had been got rid of. They were living in a rowdy atmosphere, and rowdiness jars upon romance. They had not become lovers merely in order to receive and entertain Bohemians. That was altogether the wrong frame for the picture—a frame which tended to make the picture commonplace. For an idyll such as theirs, the surroundings must be more idyllic. They must roam through the secret places of forests, and float on the still waters of lagoons. For fear lest love should languish, they must travel.

The first brief honeymoon was at Franchard, on the verge of the Forest of Fontainebleau. It has no history, which means that it was happy. It was either during the journey or immediately afterwards that Sainte-Beuve received the second of the letters which we have quoted. Another letter of about the same date gives directions for the removal of Alfred's belongings from George Sand's apartment in order that her husband may not discover them there and wonder. But the lovers were by no means satisfied to "settle down" when they returned to Paris. Apparently they found that they were too conspicuous, and that their business was everybody's business. It could hardly be otherwise. They lived, and loved, too much in public for their peace. And, of course, there was no real need for either of them to stay in Paris. Maurice was at the Lycée, and Solange could be sent to Nohant, and novels could be written anywhere. The South was calling. Why not obey the call?

There was one difficulty. Madame de Musset objected, and Alfred was a good and devoted son. His mother was

not acquainted with his mistress; but she had read her books, and drawn her inferences. George Sand's heroes seemed to her "bad form." "Has the woman never in her life met a gentleman?" she asked scornfully; and though, after the manner of French mothers, she accepted the *liaison* as something with which she had better not try to interfere, the proposal of the voyage to Italy was too severe a strain on her affection. By what means her objection was overcome she related, years afterwards, in a letter to her son Paul, published in M. Clouard's collection of "Documents inédits sur Alfred de Musset."

"I have told you a hundred times how your brother, before his departure, asked my consent to this sad journey, and how I obstinately refused it. At last, seeing how desperate I was, he threw himself on his knees, exclaiming, 'Do not weep, mother. If one of us must weep, it shall not be you.' Those were his very words. It was not likely that I should forget them. Having thus reassured me, he went to the lady and told her that he could not go—that he could not cause his mother this distress. The good son that he was! And what did the woman do? At nine o'clock in the evening, she took a cab and drove to my door. I was told that someone was below, and wished to see me. I went downstairs, followed by a servant, suspecting nothing. Seeing a woman alone in the carriage, I got into it. It was she. Then she employed all the resources of the eloquence of which she was a past mistress to induce me to entrust my son to her, assuring me that she would love him like a mother, and would take better care of him than I should myself. And so—what can I say? The siren snatched a consent from me. I yielded to her, with tears in my eyes, and against the instincts of my

heart; for *he had a prudent mother*, though she has dared to say the contrary in 'Elle et Lui.'"

That is how they settled the matter; and Paul—the devoted Paul—saw the lovers off. "On a misty, melancholy evening," he writes, "I saw them enter the stage coach amid circumstances of evil omen."

CHAPTER VIII

Meeting with Stendhal at Lyons : Arrival at Venice : George Sand works while Musset sits in cafés : Dr. Pagello sees George Sand on the balcony and admires her : She calls him in to prescribe for a headache : Shortly afterwards she summons him again to prescribe for Musset : His diagnosis.

THE circumstances of evil omen referred to in the last chapter were as follows : The coach in which the travellers took their seats was the thirteenth to leave the yard ; one of its wheels came into violent collision with a big stone while passing through the gateway ; a water-carrier was knocked over by the vehicle in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. One imagines, however, that it was only in retrospect that the significance of the auspices was realised. "Tous les commencements sont heureux," said Madame de Staël ; and this honeymoon belonged to the beginning, though it heralded the end. The lovers were in a holiday mood, ready to be amused and to laugh.

They laughed at Stendhal—novelist and French Consul at Civita Vecchia—whom they met at Lyons. He had supper with them ; and after supper, George Sand tells us, "he was very merry, got rather drunk, and danced round the table in his big top boots." They laughed again at Alfred de Musset's sea-sickness on the boat that took them from Marseilles to Genoa ; and the humours of the latter incident inspired a caricature. The poet depicts himself paying his tribute to the sea while his companion stands beside him gaily smoking a cigarette. There are other caricatures of the same date, all of them bearing unmistakable testimony to the lovers' lightness of heart.

From Marseilles George Sand wrote to her son Maurice, whom she had left at school. She would not be away long,

she said, but a warm climate was necessary for her health. She wished both her children were with her, but they were too young. Maurice must be a good boy and write regularly. He must also be diligent at his lessons, and not forget to wash his face and hands. One smiles; but perhaps there is not really anything to smile at. A woman may still desire to be a good mother, even when she has left her husband to live her own life in her own way, and so develop, as it were, the double personality which the irregular situation needs. The situation imports its own ironies, but there is nothing to be gained by insisting on them. Let us return to the itinerary.

The details are fixed by the dates on Alfred de Musset's passport. From Genoa the lovers took the boat to Leghorn, and by December 28 they were at Florence. They tossed a coin, it appears, to decide whether they would go to Venice or to Rome; and, chance having thus determined that the former city should be their goal, they reached it, after passing through Ferrara and Bologna, on January 19, 1834, and took an apartment in the Hotel Danieli. And then followed their quarrel, and Alfred de Musset's illness, and the calling in of the doctor who was to be his favoured rival.

How, and when, and about what the lovers quarrelled nobody knows for certain. The partisans of the poet tell one story, the partisans of his mistress another; and, as the stories are not mutually exclusive, both of them may perfectly well be true.

Paul de Musset's story is that his brother was shocked by George Sand's outrageous conversation. She spoke, he says, before casual acquaintances, of her mother's adventures as a camp follower of the Army of Italy—her relations with

the aged general and her flight with the captivating captain—and of her own birth within a month of her parents' wedding-day. Very possibly she did. It is the sort of thing that she was likely to do, and the sort of thing to which he was certain to object. George Sand, with all her talents, had, at that date, many of the instincts of the grisette; and grisettes are more loquacious than women of the world. Alfred de Musset, with all his faults, had the instincts of a gentleman. It is credible enough that George Sand sneered at the "filles bien élevées, dociles et hypocrites de votre caste," and that he reproached her for sacrificing her mother's reputation to her democratic theories. And assuredly, however quickly reconciliation followed, the germs of estrangement would have been contained in the animated dialogue.

On the other hand, the Sandists say that George was ill and that Alfred neglected her. It is probable enough; and he would have been the more, rather than the less, likely to do so, after such passages at arms as those which Paul de Musset reports. But her illness was not serious. It did not prevent her from going to see the sights, and it did not prevent her from working. She was paying the expenses of her honeymoon with her pen; and she was as diligent with her pen as more domesticated women with their needles. She is herself our witness for the statement that she worked eight hours a day on an average, and sometimes worked thirteen hours at a stretch. "Cette terrible vache à écrire," was an enemy's description of her; she yielded "copy" as regularly as a cow yields milk. It was a great deal to expect that Alfred de Musset would stay at home and admire her beautiful black eyes, or mend her quills and pin her sheets together, while she performed her tremendous daily task.

Perhaps she would have liked him to sit opposite to her,

busy with his own work, likes Jules Sandeau ;* but poetry is not thus composed *currente calamo.* Inspiration is a gift, and the poet must wait till it is given ; and the poet does not wait most happily or hopefully while condemned to listen to a fellow-worker's pen unceasingly scratching the paper. That way lie boredom and impatience ; and Alfred de Musset fled impatiently from boredom, and went to wait elsewhere. We have no proof that George Sand tried to detain him. It is to be presumed that she worked better and faster when he was out of the way. Only he was the sort of young man who, left to his own devices in a strange city, was certain to get into mischief.

There is a story, not so well attested as it might be, that he was inveigled into a gambling hell and lost ten thousand francs, and that George Sand borrowed money from Buloz to enable him to pay this debt of honour. Whether that story be true or not, it is certain that his manner of life was dissipated. He sat late in cafés—and not alone. The French Consul, proud no doubt to render a service to a distinguished French man of letters, acted as his guide and conducted him to all the most disreputable places in Venice. While his mistress was writing romances "*à jet continu*" for the *Revue des deux Mondes*, he was keeping late hours and consorting with singers, dancers, and loose women generally. But not, as some biographers seem to suggest, for any length of time ; for he had been less than a fortnight in Venice when he fell ill, and Dr. Pagello was fetched.

Why Pagello rather than another ? It used to be assumed that the choice fell upon him by accident ; that he was the

* Miss Thomas reproaches him for this, and wonders how he could have been idle with such a commendable example of diligence before his eyes.

nearest physician, or the most eminent, or the one recommended by the hotel-keeper. As a matter of fact Pagello was too young to be eminent, and the hotel-keeper had recommended someone else; but he was handsome, and George Sand already knew him.

How she had made his acquaintance we know from his own pen. He was very discreet as long as discretion mattered. At the time when George Sand's amours were the talk of Paris, he consistently held his tongue—chiefly, no doubt, because he was a gentleman, but partly also, it may be, because it was better for his practice that the story should be allowed to be forgotten. But he kept a diary; and, at last, when he was a very old man, he allowed a journalist to copy extracts from it. He had long been the sole survivor of a three-cornered love-duel; and no doubt the journalist persuaded him that such amours as his belonged to history, and that the public had a right to know the truth. So he confessed as follows:—

"I was living at Venice, where, having finished my medical studies, I was beginning to work up a practice, and, one day, I took a walk on the Quai des Esclavons with a Genoese friend, a traveller and a man of letters. As we passed beneath the windows of the Hotel Danieli, I saw, on the first floor balcony, a young woman of somewhat melancholy countenance, with very black hair and eyes that betokened a strong will and a virile character. Her attire was singular. A scarlet scarf was fastened like a turban round her head.

"Round her neck she wore a cravat, prettily fastened to a collar white as snow; and she was smoking a long cigar with the assurance of a soldier while she chatted with the fair-haired

young man who sat beside her. I stopped to look at her, and my companion quietly nudged me.

"'Ah!' he said. 'You seem to be fascinated by that charming smoker. Do you happen to know her?'

"'No,' I replied, 'but I would give a good deal to do so. She must be very different from the common run of women. Tell me, you who have travelled so much, what do you think of her?'

"'Precisely because I have seen so many women of all races and all colours,' he rejoined, 'I can form no reasonable theory. Perhaps she is a romantic Englishwoman, or else an exiled Pole. She looks like a person of high station, and she strikes me as strange and haughty.'

"Gossiping thus, we reached the Square of Saint Mark, were we separated.

"On the following day I went to call on my Genoese friend—it was Rebizzo; I do not think there is any indiscretion in naming him. He was at dinner with his family. He noticed my preoccupied air, and said turning to his wife—

"'Look, Bianchina. Our friend Pagello is thinking of a certain beauty whom he saw smoking . . .'

"'And whom Lazzaro [Rebizzo] believes,' I rejoined, 'to be a Pole or an Englishwoman, but whom I can assure you to be of pure French blood. I was with her an hour ago, and I shall return to see her again. She is a patient, and she has asked for my address.'

"'Indeed!' exclaimed Lazzaro, opening his eyes wide.

"'Certainly, certainly. Danieli, the hotel-keeper, fetched me this morning, and I was shown into the smoking-lady's room. She was sitting on a low chair, leaning her head on her hand, and she asked me to give her something to cure a bad headache. I felt her pulse, and proposed to bleed her.

She agreed. I performed the operation there and then, and she felt better. In saying good-bye to me, she asked me to come and see her again, unless I heard to the contrary. The fair-haired youth, her inseparable companion, escorted me most politely to the foot of the staircase. That is all that happened this morning. But a presentiment—whether pleasant or bitter I cannot say—whispers to me, 'You will see that woman again, and she will make a conquest of you.'

"There followed a long pause, interrupted by a burst of laughter from my hosts, who declared that I was *in love.* 'No, no,' I replied; 'not yet.' 'But who is this foreigner?' asked Bianchina. I answered that I did not know. 'But why didn't you ask the hotel-keeper who she was and where she came from?' 'Why? Because I was afraid to know.' 'Ah, ah!" they said; 'he is in love.'"

A few days passed—"twenty days," according to Pagello's narrative, but it cannot really have been so long—and then he called again on Rebizzo and showed him the following letter:—

"My dear Mr. Pagello,—Please come and see us as soon as you possibly can, and bring a good physician with you for a consultation on the case of the French invalid at the hotel.

"Let me tell you before you come that I am more anxious about his reason than about his life. Since he has been ill, his head has been exceedingly weak, and he often argues like a baby. Nevertheless, he is a man of energetic character and powerful imagination—a poet much admired in France. But the excitement of brain-work, wine, dissipation, women and the gaming table have much fatigued him, and have wrought

upon his nerves. He gets agitated over the smallest trifles as if they were matters of importance.

"Once, three months ago, he was like a raving maniac all night long in consequence of some trouble that he had on his mind. He thought he saw phantoms round his bed, and he shrieked with fear and horror. At present he is still uneasy, and this morning he knows neither what he says nor what he does. He weeps; he complains of a distress to which he can assign neither name nor cause; he calls for his country, and vows that he is going to die or go mad.

"I do not know whether this is the result of the fever, or of nervous excitement, or is a beginning of insanity. I think bleeding would afford him relief.

"I beg you to repeat all this to the doctor, and not to be deterred by the difficulties presented by the patient's intractable disposition. He is the person whom I love best in the world, and I am terribly distressed to see him in this state.

"I hope you will show us all the friendship that two foreigners can hope for.

"Excuse the miserable Italian that I write.

"GEORGE SAND."

This letter is important, and proves a good deal beyond the fact that George Sand found a difficulty in expressing herself in the Italian language. It proves, when read in conjunction with Pagello's confession, that she had noticed his manœuvres underneath her balcony, and had gone out of her way to seek his acquaintance. It suggests unmistakably that the alleged headache was rather a pretext than a reason for inviting him to call. One may almost infer from it that their relations had been so little professional that she did not even know that he was a fully qualified medical man, and

one may certainly infer that she had no confidence whatever in his professional skill. Since a Dr. Saintini was already in attendance, this can be the only meaning of the appeal to Pagello not to come alone, but to bring some competent colleague with him.

He was cleverer than she thought, however; and no doubt he had a good bedside manner, to be assumed at the proper time and dropped again when occasion ceased to call for it. At all events, he inspired sufficient confidence to be retained in charge of the case; and this portion of his narrative continues:—

"To read the letter to the end it was necessary to turn over the leaf. What astonished my friends was the signature which, when they had read it, caused them to exclaim with a single voice, '*George Sand!*'

"They then asked me whether I had visited my French patient, what was the matter with him, and how he was getting on. I answered, 'My young patient is in bed with a very grave illness which I and my colleague have diagnosed as a very dangerous typhoid fever. His name is Alfred de Musset.'

"'Per Bacco!' exclaimed Rebizzo, 'that is the romantic singer of the moon. Do you know his poems?'

"'Yes,' I replied. 'I have read two or three of them. He has a wonderful imagination—a little extravagant, but very delicate, all the same.'"

CHAPTER IX

The nature of Musset's illness : The reasons for supposing it not to have been typhoid fever : The behaviour of George Sand and Pagello at the bedside : George Sand's declaration of love : Pagello's doubts and hesitations : It is agreed between them that Musset shall return alone.

MADAME KARÉNINE states that Alfred de Musset's illness was not typhoid fever but delirium tremens. She gives no reasons for the statement, relying apparently upon tradition and report ; but the conclusion is one which, even without the help of rumour, a physician would be inclined to deduce from the records of the symptoms and the treatment.

The reasons why Pagello cannot have " diagnosed " either " typhoid fever," as he says he did in one version of the story, or " a nervous typhoid fever," of which he speaks in another, are, at any rate, obvious and irrefutable. " Nervous typhoid fever " is a complication unknown to medicine ; and typhoid fever itself was unknown to medicine in the year 1834. Typhoid and typhus were, at that date, confused and called " continued fever "—a term used to distinguish them from the intermittent malarial fevers. The alleged " diagnosis " is, therefore, quite evidently an afterthought, or a euphemism.

It certainly was not, however, an afterthought due to increased pathological knowledge. What we know of the patient's symptoms not only fails to suggest typhoid fever, but is absolutely incompatible with it. Of several characteristic typhoid symptoms there is no mention. The convalescence was too rapid. The fever was *not*, as George Sand's letter, quoted at the end of the last chapter, shows, continued. Nor can the alternative theory of intermittent, or malarial, fever be entertained. An Italian physician could

not conceivably have failed to recognise that disorder; and no delicate consideration for the feelings of the Musset family need have hindered him from naming it.

We have Pagello's prescription, which Alfred de Musset kept. M. Clouard publishes it in his "Documents inédits," and it is as follows :—

Aq. ceras. nigr.	ij
Laud. liquid. Sydn. gutt.	xx
Aq. coob. laur. ceras. gutt.	xv

This, by itself, proves little. The medicine is only the common sedative of the period, and might have been administered merely because the doctor did not know exactly what was the matter; but when we find the delirious patient to whom it is given, seeing "phantoms" around his bed, needing to be held down by two strong men, warned by his doctor, during his convalescence, to avoid strong drink, suspected of obtaining it surreptitiously, and relapsing, we know pretty well what to think. All these conditions were present in the case; and we have a very graphic picture of the delirium in a letter which George Sand addressed to Boucoiran.

"Last night," she says, "was awful. Six hours of such frenzy that, in spite of the efforts of two strong men, he ran about his room in a state of nudity. Shouts, songs, yells, convulsions! Oh, my God! What a spectacle it was!"

There seems no doubt that the sufferer was skilfully treated and well nursed. He always believed, and frequently declared, that he owed his life to Pagello's ability and George Sand's attentive care. But it is none the less true that his mistress made love to his doctor while he was lying ill. His brother

goes so far as to say that he saw them doing so at a time when they believed him to be asleep.

The story is very circumstantial. Paul de Musset first told it in "Lui et Elle." It has since been confirmed by a document said to have been dictated to the author by Alfred de Musset himself. He saw George Sand, he says, sitting on Pagello's knee and kissing him; he saw them have tea together and drink from the same cup. And he concludes:—

"When they had finished, Pagello got up to go. G. S. went to the door with him. They passed behind a screen, and I fancied that they kissed each other. Then George Sand took a lamp to light Pagello down the stairs. They were a long time together on the staircase. During that time I succeeded in lifting myself on to my trembling hands, and drew myself up *on all fours* on the bed. I strained my eyes to look at the table. There was only one cup there. So I was not mistaken. They were lovers. The matter did not admit of the shadow of a doubt. It was enough for me. And yet I contrived to make myself doubt, so revolting was it to me to believe so horrible a thing."

The charge is specific, and George Sand always repudiated it with indignation. It is impossible to check either her statement or that of her accuser. The visions of a delirious man who admittedly "saw phantoms" cannot be taken as evidence; and we cannot even exclude the possibility that he may have been under the influence of absinthe when he told his brother the story. But, on the other hand, it is impossible, in view of the known facts, to say that the story is intrinsically improbable; and indeed the known facts are of such a nature as to deprive it of a good deal of its importance. George Sand may or may not have

drunk her tea from the same cup as Pagello; but it is not to be denied that she made a declaration of love to him in the sickroom. That much could be proved from the Correspondence if there were reason to disbelieve the *bona fides* of Pagello's own narrative, which is as follows:—

"As you may imagine, I was assiduous in my attendance on my patient. George Sand often sat up whole nights with me at his bedside. We did not watch in silence; and George Sand's charm and lofty intelligence, and the gentle confidence which she displayed in me, attached me to her every day, every hour, every moment, by a stronger chain. We used to talk of literature, of the Italian poets and artists, of Venetian history, monuments, and manners; but at each fresh turn that the conversation took, she interrupted me and asked me what I was thinking about. Confused when I found myself caught thus absorbed in my own thoughts, I apologised profusely, blushed as red as the glowing coals, while she would say, with an almost imperceptible smile and a subtle glance, 'Ah, doctor, my thousand and one questions are boring you.' And I had nothing to say.

"One evening, when Alfred de Musset asked us to quit his bedside because he felt fairly well and wanted to go to sleep, we sat down at a table near the chimney.

"'Well, madame,' I said to her, 'are you intending to write a novel about our beautiful Venice?'

"'Perhaps,' she replied; and she took a sheet of paper and began to write with the desperate haste of one who improvises. I looked at her in astonishment, watching her face, so firm, so severe, so inspired. Then, anxious not to disturb her, I opened a volume of Victor Hugo which was lying on the table, and ran my eyes over a few passages,

though without being able to pay the least attention to what I was reading. In this way a long hour passed. At last George Sand laid down her pen, and, without looking at me or speaking to me, laid her head between her hands, and remained in that attitude for more than a quarter of an hour. Then, rising, she looked me straight in the eyes, picked up the sheet of paper on which she had been writing, and said, 'It is for you.' Finally, taking the lamp, she gently approached Alfred, who was asleep, and asked me—

"'Doctor, do you think the night is going to be fine?'

"'Yes,' I replied.

"'Then you can go now, and we shall see each other again to-morrow.'

"I left her, and went straight home to my apartments, where I made haste to open the missive."

According to another version of the story, the doctor affected not to know—possibly even did not know—for who the communication was intended, and George Sand had to explain that it was "for the dense Pagello"; but that detail hardly matters. The communication, in any case, was a love letter—an avowal of love and a demand for it. Sixty-two years afterwards, when George Sand and Musset had long been in their graves, and he was nearly a nonogenarian, the old man gave the document to Dr. Cabanès to be published.

It was a long and lyrical effusion—"effusion" really seems the appropriate word. Like most improvisations, it repeats the same sentiment over and over again. "I know nothing about you, and yet I love you. We do not speak each other's languages—we do not understand each other—but no matter. The love may not last—but never mind

about that. I love you now: I want you." That is the burden of the song; and, of course, there is more than one appeal to God; and the last lines run thus:—

"Perhaps you think that you do not know me—and that I do not know you. I am ignorant of your past life, and of your character, and of what the men who do know you think of you. Perhaps you are the best of men; perhaps the worst. I love you without knowing whether I shall be able to respect you. I love you because I feel drawn to you, and it is quite possible that I shall soon be compelled to hate you.

"If you were a countryman of my own, I would question you, and you would understand. But that might make my case still more miserable; for you might deceive me.

"But you will not deceive me. You will make no empty promises, and swear no false oaths. You will love me, according to your lights, as best you can. I may not find in you what I have vainly sought in others; but I shall always believe that you possess it. You will allow me to interpret as I please the looks and caresses of love, and will not delude me with deceitful words. I shall be able to interpret your dreams, and shall find an eloquent meaning in your silence. Your actions will have for me whatever significance I desire. When your looks are tender, I shall fancy that your soul is speaking to mine. When you lift your eyes to heaven, I shall imagine that your intelligence is ascending to the eternal home from which it emanates.

"Let things remain, then, like that. Do not learn my language, and I will not seek in yours for the words which might tell you of my doubts and fears. I am willing to be ignorant of your life, and of the part that you play in the

world of men. I should like even to be ignorant of your name; but you must at least conceal your soul from me, that I may always believe it to be beautiful."

A strange letter truly for the romantic writer of European reputation to address to the struggling young general practitioner. Evidently his behaviour, up to that point, cannot have been very unprofessional, or a much simpler declaration would have sufficed. And it was not by any means a declaration that every general practitioner would have found flattering; for it spoke not of a real union of hearts, but only of blind passion, rejoicing in its blindness and afraid of opening its eyes. George Sand, in short, was treating Pagello very much as Prosper Mérimée had treated her,—declining in very much the same way, though with a more open-hearted candour, to take him seriously.

An older man—a man with a stronger sense of personal dignity—would have perceived that, and resented it; or would have tried to play the game as Mérimée played it, with irony and indifference in reserve. But George Sand was very famous, and Pagello was very young. His point of view was rather that of the medical student than of the professional man. He felt immensely flattered—dazzled by his good fortune, and yet, at the same time, half afraid of it. We must turn once more to his own chronicle of his emotions.

"Yes, yes, there is no denying that this woman's genius astonished and overwhelmed me. If I had been in love with her from the first, you can imagine how much more deeply I was in love with her after I had read this letter. I would have given anything to see her at once, throw myself at her feet, and swear undying love to her. The hour was too

late, however; and there I sat, with the sheet of paper in front of me, reading it through again with the same enthusiasm. And yet, when I had read it through for the third time, certain phrases in the letter, and the general tone of it, awakened a certain indefinable sensation of bitterness which seemed to rise into my brain from the very depths of my heart.

"'She clothes her Epicureanism with a delicate aureole of glory,' I said to myself. 'She depicts me as a demi-god and dallies with me after throwing over me the shirt of Nessus. I feel that I am letting myself become entangled in her net to no good purpose, and, thus caught, I want to know: Is she the best of women or the worst? And then I thought of my professional position. Just qualified, I was beginning to work up a practice, and, for that purpose, professional knowledge does not suffice. Irreproachable moral conduct is also requisite. And, finally, I remembered Alfred de Musset. He was young, seriously ill, a foreigner; he had confided himself to my care, and he relied upon my friendship. These reflections troubled me, and, as I held my head in my hands, I seemed to feel my brain flying to and fro like the weaver's shuttle.'"

The doctor then looked for guidance to the portrait of his dead mother. She had often warned him that, if he were immoral, he would be unhappy. He lay awake all night, thinking of that; and at ten o'clock he went, as usual, to visit his patient. Alfred de Musset was better, and was alone. Agitated by the conflicting impulses of desire and duty, Pagello did not venture to inquire were George Sand was. But then—

"Suddenly the door at which I was looking opened, and

George Sand appeared. Gloves of rare whiteness were on her little hands. Her dress was of brown satin, and she wore a small plush hat with a beautiful waving ostrich feather, and a Cashmere shawl with a large arabesque pattern in the best and most refined French taste. I have never before seen her dressed so elegantly; and I had not recovered from my surprise when she approached me with charming grace and ease, and said, 'Signor Pagello, I have some shopping to do, and should be glad of your company, if it would not inconvenience you to come with me.'"

Pagello, of course, could only say that he would be delighted. They said good-bye to Musset, and went out together.

"Outside I felt that I could breathe more freely, and I spoke with greater ease and fluency. She told me on what terms she had, for several months, been living with Alfred, and how many reasons she had to complain of him, and that she had made up her mind not to return to France in his company. Then I recognised my fate, and felt neither glad nor sorry, but walked into the abyss with my eyes shut. I spare you the account of my long conversation with George Sand, as we walked to and fro, for three hours, on the Piazza San Marco. We talked as everybody talks in such a case; we conjugated all the moods of the verb 'to love.' But, after three weeks had elapsed, more grave events occurred."

CHAPTER X

How Alfred de Musset was told : His own version of the story : The improbabilities in it : Pagello's version : Musset's departure : His farewell letters.

THOUGH doubts afterwards recurred, Alfred de Musset seems to have been successfully persuaded at the time that the love scene which he believed himself to have witnessed was the hallucination of a disordered brain. But love scenes were nevertheless being enacted behind his back if not before his eyes. It was only a question whether he should be told, or should be left to discover for himself, that there had been a fresh shuffling of hearts while he lay delirious or unconscious.

In a letter from George Sand to Pagello, published by M. Paul Mariéton in "Une Histoire d'Amour," we see that question examined, at great length, in all its bearings. It would have been the wiser plan, George Sand thinks, to engage a room in some other hotel and receive her new lover there. But that has not been done; and Alfred already suspects; and his suspicions will, in a day or two, become certainties: "A glance exchanged will be enough to make him mad with anger and jealousy."

Pagello, it seems, has begged George Sand to be generous to Alfred and forgive him. Evidently he has been dragged into the adventure against his better judgment, is rather ashamed of the double part which he is playing, and would be glad of an opportunity to withdraw from it, as Mérimée withdrew before him. But he has neither Mérimée's strength of character nor his gift of supercillious irony. He cannot resist. His mistress has caught him, and will keep him. Why not tell Alfred the truth? she asks. He will weep, of course; but then he will calm down and go away. As for

her pardoning him—that is impossible. He has committed the unpardonable offence—he has told her that he has ceased to love her. She is willing to be a friend—a sister—to him, but nothing more. That sort of magnanimity is not in her character: her pride forbids.

In truth, however, it was not her pride but her passion that forbade. The barrier of her pride, as we shall see later, could be passed when passion ceased to guard it. But passion defended it now, like an angel with a flaming sword. The rest of the letter is a veritable hymn to Passion—the cry of Sappho for Phaon, though not an unavailing cry. She is growing old, but her heart is not worn out. On the contrary, it is passionate and strong. She felt assured of its vigour when at last Pagello covered her with his caresses. And, as usual, she calls God to witness.

"Yes, I can still love. Those who said that I could not lied. None but God can say to me, 'You shall never love again.' And I feel that He has not said it—that He has not withdrawn the celestial fire from my heart; and the greater my aspirations in love, the greater my capacity for loving him who satisfies them. And that is you—yes, you. Remain just as you are at present; do not alter. There is nothing in you that does not please and satisfy me. This is the first time that I have loved without suffering agonies at the end of three days. . . . Oh, when shall I be alone with you? You shall lock me up in your room, and take the key when you go out, so that I may see and hear nothing—no one—but you.

"To be happy for a year, and then to die! That is all I ask from God and from you. Good-night, dearest Pietro; my troubles cease to trouble me when I am with you. And

yet lying is always a melancholy business. This dissimulation is odious to me. This love of mine and Alfred's—so ill rewarded, so deplorable—which is in the agony of death, and can neither be renewed nor ended, is a torture. I have it before my eyes as an evil omen for the future, that seems to say to me, 'Look! That is what love comes to.' But, no no. I do not want to believe that. I want to place all my hopes and all my trust in you alone, and to love you in spite of everything, and in spite of myself. It was not what I wished. But you have compelled me to do it. God has willed it. Let my destiny be accomplished!"

So the question still remained: should Alfred be told, or left to find out for himself? It is not known for certain how they settled it. There is a conflict of evidence. Each of the three has told a different story; and the probability, once again, is that the truth is divided between them.

Alfred de Musset declares that he found out. The statement is contained in another document dictated to his brother Paul, and recently communicated by his sister, Madame Lardin de Musset, to M. Mariéton.

He had had, he says, an "explanation" with George Sand, who "denied with barefaced effrontery the incidents which I had seen and heard, and assured me that it was a hallucination of my delirium." Later in the evening, seeing a light in her bedroom, which communicated with his own, he put on his dressing-gown and went in to her. She was writing a letter on her knees; and, as he entered, he saw her hide it in the bed. He accused her of writing to Pagello.

"She flew into a terrible passion, and said that, if I went on like that, I should never leave Venice. I asked her how she would prevent me. 'By locking you up in a lunatic

asylum,' was her reply. I admit that I was frightened, and I returned to my room without daring to answer her."

The next thing that happened was that Musset heard George Sand first open and then close the window. Evidently, he thought, she had torn the letter up and thrown the fragments into the street. He went downstairs to see; but George Sand was there before him, in her petticoat and shawl, searching for the lost scraps of paper. He laid his hand on her shoulder and spoke to her. Her conduct, he said, proved to him that it was, indeed, to Pagello that she had written. And then—

"She replied that I should not sleep in my bed that night —that she would have me arrested at once; and she ran. I followed as fast as I could. Reaching the Grand Canal, she jumped into a gondola, calling to the gondolier to go to the Lido; but I had leapt into the gondola too, by her side, and we set off together. She did not open her mouth all the time we were on the water. Disembarking at the Lido, she again began to run, leaping from tomb to tomb in the Jewish Cemetery. I followed, leaping as she did. At last, she sat down, exhausted, on a tombstone, and began to cry in rage and annoyance. 'If I were you,' I said, 'I would abandon an impossible undertaking. You will not succeed in getting to Pagello without me, and causing me to be locked up as a lunatic. Confess now that you are a ——.' 'Well, yes, I am,' she answered. 'And a miserable ——,' I added. And then she acknowledged herself defeated, and I brought her back to the house."

This story is no doubt true in the main; but the Mussetists infer too much from it. Its significance can be measured by

the text of the letter, which was recovered, handed to Musset, and found, after his death, among his papers. It was to the effect that he had had a relapse, and had again been behaving like a madman, and that there was some reason to suspect that he had been drinking. Naturally George Sand did not wish him to see that letter, fearing that it would provoke him to violence. Apparently, when he became violent, she did lose her temper, and did say something about a lunatic asylum. His behaviour may very well have suggested the exclamation. But no dark design to sequestrate her lover can reasonably be deduced from an angry woman's hasty words; and it is not specially probable that she seized that occasion to confess her infidelity. In that particular one may fairly suspect that Musset embroidered his narrative; and one finds more inherent probability in the theory that his suspicions were revived, if not first aroused, by what he heard from his friend Alfred Tattet.

Tattet was a rich man, the son of a stockbroker, not a man of letters, but a man of pleasure—an amiable and cultivated dandy—who had often been Musset's companion in his hours of dissipation. Madame Déjazet, the celebrated actress, was his mistress. In the winter of 1833–1834 he took her to Italy, and made a détour to visit Musset and George Sand at Venice. His first impression seems to have been that, save for Alfred's illness, all was well with the *ménage*. He took them to the theatre, and he wrote a reassuring letter about them to Sainte-Beuve, who, as George Sand's "confessor," was feeling anxious. There is no picture in that letter of a nurse sitting on a doctor's knee, or of a poet in a dressing-gown pursuing a half-dressed novelist among the tombstones in the dark. On the contrary: "Alfred is in the hands of a very devoted and capable young man who looks after him,

like a brother, having taken over the case from an old ass who was going the right way to kill him."

It would seem, however, that Tattet presently became aware of breaches in the continuity of Pagello's professional manner, and warned his friend. That is what Madame Tattet afterwards told M. Clouard, adding that Musset first wanted, in his blind rage, to murder George Sand, and then proposed to challenge Pagello to a duel, but that Tattet dissuaded him. A later letter from George Sand to Tattet refers to the incident, though without throwing much light upon it.

"I thought it quite right and proper," she wrote on August 24, 1838, "that you preferred your friend to me; and, after all, you rendered me a greater service than that of keeping my secret, seeing that you prevented him from fighting, and I should not have liked to pay for your silence by the smallest drop of his blood."

If Musset was persuaded not to fight, it seems reasonable to presume that he was also persuaded that Tattet had been mistaken; and it is possible that the actual and definite revelation, superseding all suspicions, was made to him in the circumstances described by Pagello himself, as reported by the *Illustrazione Italiana*. According to that story, they stood by his bed, and held this dialogue :—

"Doctor," George Sand began coldly, "do you think Alfred is strong enough to stand a shock?"

"I beg your pardon. What did you say?" Pagello asked.

"Very well. I am going to speak frankly. My dear Alfred, I am no longer your mistress. I can only be your friend. I love Dr. Pagello."

That at the time when Madame de Musset, having heard of Alfred's illness, which Paul told her was probably "some kind of brain fever," was running, in great concern, to the office of the *Revue des deux Mondes* to try to get news from Buloz, and was sending messages of "deepest gratitude to Madame Sand for all the care that she has taken of you!"

In a sense, no doubt, she deserved the gratitude—or some of it. She had taken care of him, and she had nursed him, at an hour when a nurse was of more importance to him than a mistress. It would almost seem that it was a case of conscience with her to do so, and that she desired to compensate for her infidelities by devoted assiduity of service. But the truth was out. There was nothing for Alfred to do except to pack his boxes and depart.

He had been violent; but, at the last, he accepted the situation calmly. It was a situation which he had provoked, and he knew it; and he was young and weak and ill. We may take it that he was half hypnotised by George Sand's talk, and that he felt too feeble to resent or resist the inevitable. She and the doctor could always throw in his teeth the fact that they had saved his life, compelling him to temper jealousy with gratitude. He could hardly even leave them, shaking the dust from off his feet. But go he must. His only relief was in escape.

He escaped towards the end of March, sending George Sand this letter:—

"Farewell! However much you hate me—or however indifferent you feel to me—still, if the good-bye kiss that I gave you to-day is the last that I am ever to give you, you must know that, as soon as I had stepped outside your door, with the thought that I had lost you for ever, I felt that I

had deserved to lose you, and that no punishment is too hard for me. Even if you care little to know whether your memory lingers with me or not, it is very important to me, now that your image effaces itself in the distance, to tell you that there will remain no impure thought in the furrow of my life through which you have passed, and that he who could not esteem you when he possessed you can still see that fact clearly through his tears, and honour you in his his heart, where your recollection will abide for ever. Farewell!"

To which George Sand replied, in a note scrawled hastily and handed to the gondolier whom she kept waiting for the answer :—

"No, do not go like that. You are not well enough yet, and Buloz has not yet sent the money which you need for Antonio's * travelling expenses. I do not want you to go alone. My God! Why should we quarrel? Am I not always your brother George, your good friend of former times?"

That note seems to have persuaded him to remain for another day. On the following morning George Sand saw him off, and even travelled a certain distance with him, and gave him as a keepsake a pocket-book and diary, with autograph dedications from both Pagello and herself.

Having crossed the Simplon, he wrote to her from Geneva —a strange and pathetic letter which shows him still in love, still taking all the blame for the rupture, still acquiescing in

* A servant engaged to accompany Musset on the journey back to Paris.

his punishment for his fault, and hypnotised, as it were, into an abject humility.

"DEAREST GEORGE,—I am at Geneva. I left Milan without having had a letter from you. Perhaps you had written; but I had engaged my seats in the diligence as soon as I arrived, and chance had it that the mail from Venice, which usually arrives two hours before the Geneva diligence starts, was late. Please, if you did write to me at Milan, tell the Postmaster to forward your letter to Paris. I want it, if it is but two lines. Write to me at Paris. When you cross the Simplon, George, think of me. It was the first time that I had seen the spectacle of the everlasting hills rising before me in all their power and calm. I was alone in the carriage. I do not know how to describe my sensations; but it seemed to me that these giants spoke to me of all the great things that the hand of God has made. 'I am only a little child,' I exclaimed to myself, 'but I have two grown-up friends, and they are happy.'"

CHAPTER XI

The three-cornered love-duel : George Sand's letters to Musset describing her relations with Pagello : Pagello's letter to Musset : Storms in the "faux ménage" : Remonstrances of Pagello's cast-off mistresses : And of his father : George Sand and Pagello attend public worship and pray together : George Sand decides that Pagello shall take her to Paris.

IN spite of Musset's departure, the three-cornered love-duel continued, though, for a time, it could only be carried on by correspondence. There are a number of letters in which we may try to read the minds of the three lovers, though the psychology is hard to realise in these saner and more level-headed days. The classical saying that "love is a kind of madness" was never more true than in the Romantic period.

A partial clue to George Sand's proceedings may perhaps be found in a letter to Boucoiran. Her son's tutor was the confidant whom she generally selected when she felt moved to confess that her embraces threatened to be fatal to her lovers. She had already volunteered the confession in the case of Jules Sandeau. "I am killing him," she had written ; and she had also, as we have seen, reported his answer that that was the death he wished to die. And now, *mutatis mutandis*, the confession is repeated.

"Alfred," she writes, "has left for Paris without me, and I am going to remain here a few months longer. You know the reasons of our separation. Every day that passed made it more necessary, and it would have been impossible for him to travel with me without the risk of a relapse. His chest, which is still very delicate, obliged him to abstain completely from all excesses ; but the excited condition of his nerves

rendered the privation intolerable to him. We have had to make our arrangements with a view to removing these risks and distresses, and to part as soon as we could. He was still very delicate to undertake so long a journey, and I am rather uneasy in my mind as to how he will stand it. But he was doing himself more harm by staying than by going, and every day that he spent waiting to get better retarded instead of accelerating his recovery."

It is a grim admission, though no doubt it tells a part of the truth. George Sand could scarcely be expected to add that Pagello was handsome and ardent, and that her own necessities were imperious, though that is what one easily reads between the lines.

Nothing is more evident than that George Sand never loved Pagello quite as she had loved Musset. There was no reason why she should, and there were many reasons why she should not. The doctor was not exactly a fool, as Musset's partisans pretend. He was a good doctor, and capable of becoming a better one. But, though able, he was commonplace. He had no gifts except those for which the excercise of his profession called. In the city of palaces and gondolas a certain illusion was possible; but only the illusion to which one resigns oneself, taking a certain temperate delight in it, but at the same time recognising it for what it is. Between his soul and the soul of a woman of genius there could be no transcendental link.

George Sand knew that, and practically said as much in the declaration of love quoted in the last chapter. "No doubt I am deceived, but please do not undeceive me," is a fair summary of the substance of that document, in which she avowed that she largely depended for her deception upon

the fact that she and Pagello spoke different languages. Of a truth it was a strange alliance that was thus contracted; and the triumph of her personality may be said to have reached its zenith when she succeed in persuading Musset to give it his blessing. We have one of her letters in which she reminds him that he did so, recalling the solemn emotions experienced

"when you extorted from him his confession of his love for me, and he swore to you that he would make me happy. Ah; what a night of enthusiasm it was when you made us clasp hands, in spite of ourselves, saying, 'You love each other, and you both love me; you have saved me, body and soul.'"

All that is most fantastic in the ecstasies of Romanticism is in that exclamation; and the succeeding incidents of the story follow like a conclusion from its premisses. The soul and the senses are drawing George Sand in opposite directions. Both her lovers are necessary to her, though for different reasons; and her heart follows the lover whom she has turned away.

That fact appears in the correspondence from the first. We have a glimpse of it in a letter to the faithful Boucoiran

"I suspect we shall become lovers again. We exchanged no promises indeed; but we shall always love each other, and the sweetest moments in our lives will be those which we shall pass in each other's company."

We have more than a glimpse of it in the letters to Musset himself. He left Venice, it will be remembered, on March 29, and already, on April 3, George Sand is writing:—

"Do not be uneasy about me. I am as strong as a horse. But do not expect me to be gay and tranquil in my mind. That will not happen yet awhile. Ah! who will look after you, and whom shall I have to look after? Who will feel the need of me, and to whom shall I be willing to give my care in the future? How shall I exist without the happiness and the distress that you caused me?"

And then, on April 15:—

"Do not believe, Alfred, do not believe that I can be happy with the thought that I have lost your heart. Whether I was your mistress or your mother matters little. Whether it was love or friendship that I inspired—whether I was happy or unhappy with you—all those considerations have no bearing on my present state of mind. I know that I love you now, and that is all."

And then again:—

"Why is it that I who would have given all the blood in my veins to secure you one night of tranquillity and repose have become for you a torment, a scourge, a spectre? When these terrible recollections assail me—and at what hour do they leave me in peace?—I am nearly driven mad, and drench my pillow with my tears. I hear your voice calling me in the silence of the night. Who is there to call me now? For whom shall I need to keep watch and vigil? To what purpose shall I employ the vigour which I had stored up for you, and which is now turned against myself? Oh, my child, my child! How I need your tenderness and your forgiveness! Do not speak to me of my own forgiveness! Never tell me that you have wronged me! What do I know of that? I remember nothing about it except

that we were very unhappy and that we parted. But I know—I feel—that we shall love each other until the end of our lives."

That is the voice of passion, loud and unmistakable. The picture which we should draw, if such utterances were our only evidence, would be that of a deserted mistress, eating out her passionate heart in solitude. But we know better; the letters themselves tell us better. The end of the appeal comes as a shocking anti-climax; and Musset must have felt something akin to a cold *douche* when he read on and found that the evocation of tender memories only led up to this:—

"I am living very nearly alone. Pagello comes home to dinner with me. I pass the most agreeable moments of my day in talking to him about you. He is a man of such delicate sentiment, and so good. He understands my melancholy so well. He respects it so religiously."

Musset, one imagines, hardly knew what to make of it all. He had supposed that everything was over between them; and he had plunged into his usual dissipations, trying vainly to forget. He begged George Sand not to remind him of the past, and yet he took a morbid pleasure in dwelling on it. He wrote again to thank her for her friendship, and to bless her for her influence, which he declared, perhaps untruly, had given him the courage to abandon his dissolute life. But he also accepted the situation, and did not try to alter it, writing in praise of his rival: "When I saw that fine fellow Pagello, I recognised in him all that was best in myself, but pure and free from those irreparable taints by which my own better nature was poisoned. That is how I came to the conclusion that it was best for me to go." And finally he says:—

"I am going to turn it all into a novel. I should very much like to write the story of our relations. It seems to me that that would cure me, and give my heart back its courage. I should like to build an altar to you, though it were with my bones."

Reading these letters now, we can see that what happened was only what was bound to happen—that the heart was awaiting the satiety of the senses in impatience. George Sand seems to have suspected as much from the beginning; and no doubt Pagello came to suspect it also towards the end. To contemporary spectators at Venice, however, nothing of the kind can have been visible. All that they saw was two young people, apparently very well pleased with each other, setting up a "*faux ménage*," and conducting it in such a manner as to make it a model to all who would do likewise.

The lovers began, after the approved fashion, with a honeymoon journey, wandering away up into the Alps, roughing it in humble country inns with the buoyant enthusiasm of their youth, unwilling to return till all their money was spent. George Sand had, she tells us, only seven centimes in her pocket when she and the doctor returned to Venice to set up housekeeping.

They were braving public opinion, and they were made to feel it. Pagello at any rate felt it, even if George Sand did not. He was a conventional, though not a moral, man, brought up to regard appearances as a physician must, not accustomed, in matters of gallantry, to let his right hand know what his left hand did. As for Romanticism, he hardly knew even the word until George Sand taught him to lisp it; and now he found himself dragged into the Movement

and exploited, prompted to ecstasies alien from his nature, taught to mumble mystic formulæ about "our love for Alfred," and stimulated to write bad verses about lagoons and gondolas, and the moon and stars.

"No more of melancholy thoughts!
To the open sea we'll hie.
The lagoons are beautiful to-night;
The moon is in the sky.

She will be jealous; draw your veil,
And hide your eyes so bright.
For you are fresh, and young, and fair;
Laugh and make love to-night."

That was Dr. Pagello's barcarolle; and the theme which it celebrated was not a discreet intrigue but an open scandal. His mistress had promised, indeed, that he should lock her up in his apartments so that no one but himself might ever see her, but that promise was not kept. She walked abroad with him, hanging on his arm, and there was trouble of various kinds. Some of the doctor's friends laughed at him, and others cut him, and there were ladies who offered ironical congratulations; but "George Sand, with that keenness of perception which was characteristic of her, saw and understood it all, and when she observed clouds of annoyance gathering on my brow, she dissipated them instantly by her ready wit and enchanting graces."

Moreover, the doctor had a past from which it was difficult for him to cut himself immediately adrift; and one may perhaps infer something as to the nature of George Sand's attachment to him from the fact that the discovery of his embarrassments only amused her. She describes him in a

letter as "a sentimental Don Juan who finds that he has four women on his hands at once"; and she relates how one of the four called to protest against this new *liaison*, and to assert her own prior claims upon the doctor. The visitor, it appears, proceeded to violence, first "pulling his hair off by handfuls, and tearing his beautiful waistcoat," and then turning upon his mistress, threatening to take vengeance with a knife. But the strangest fact of all is that Musset and no other was the recipient of those confidences.

Finally, there was trouble with the doctor's family. His father, who lived at Castel-Franco, wrote him a long letter of remonstrance, and ordered his brother Robert, with whom he shared rooms, to seek another lodging; but this opposition was overcome. Pagello took George Sand to see the old man, and the old man was conquered.

"He received me stiffly," Pagello says, "but he welcomed George Sand with the most courteous hospitality; and after having discussed French literature with her, he was so subjugated by her poetical eloquence than he evidently thought, 'This deserter of the paternal hearth is not so wrong after all.' We spent an hour with him, and then went by way of Bassano to the Grotto of Parolini."

Thus one storm broke and passed, and the other storm was averted; and the life of the "*faux ménage*" became tranquil, and almost humdrum.

The lack of pence vexed the lovers at first. George Sand's remittances did not arrive punctually; and the letters in which she tried to stimulate her paymasters to activity represent her as sleeping on the floor because she cannot afford to

buy a bed. Probably, however, that is exaggeration with a purpose. At all events, the remittances did arrive after a delay; and of course Pagello had his fees. He may have lost some of his patients, but he certainly did not lose them all, for we know that he went his morning rounds regularly as usual. The economies, therefore, were of the tolerable order. If George Sand did the cooking, that was only because she was proud of her proficiency in the art; and it is, indeed, recorded that the doctor, until the end of his days, retained a grateful recollection of her sauces.

She was also very fond of hanging pictures and mending furniture. Visitors sometimes found her sitting on the floor, nailing chintz to the chairs. And she worked hard—seven or eight hours a day, according to Pagello—writing "Lettres d'un Voyageur" and "Jacques"; and she went for excursions among the Adriatic Islands; and she smoked innumerable cigarettes and drank countless cups of black coffee on the Piazza San Marco; and even her religious duties were not neglected. "Sometimes," writes Pagello's daughter, Signora Antonini, "George Sand attended church with my father. There, on her knees before Him who welcomes all and pardons everything, she used to bury her face in her hands and weep."

Yet the hour of satiety was already drawing near. Pagello did not understand—or understood but dimly. To him, we may take it, George Sand appeared to be the type of woman described by M. Paul Bourget, in his "Physiologie de l'Amour Moderne," as "*pot-au-feu Cantharidé.*" But though she was that, she was also more than that. She could play that part for a season; but she was bound, in the end, to throw it up, because it did not suit her. She was a Romantic; and her life with Pagello, though it might be romance, was not

Romanticism. So presently we find her letters to Musset complaining of Pagello's limitations.

Pagello is "an angel in his sweetness, his goodness of heart, and his devotion to me." But that does not suffice. "I had accustomed myself to enthusiasm, and sometimes I feel the want of it." Nor is that all. "The worthy Pietro has not read 'Lélia,' and I don't suppose he would understand a word of it if he did." Pagello is not suspicious—that is a great thing. But George Sand "wants to suffer for someone," and she is forming this strange aspiration: "Oh! why cannot I live with both of you, and make you both happy, without belonging exclusively to either?" Moreover, she inoculates Pagello with a similar mysticism, and induces him to write:—

"DEAR ALFRED,—We have not written to each other before—perhaps because neither of us liked to be the first to do so. But that omission in no way militates against the mutual affection which will always unite us by a sublime tie incomprehensible to the rest of the world."

The end was, indeed, obviously near when letters of that sort were in the post; and Pagello tells us how it came.

"In the month of August she told me that it was absolutely necessary for her to go and spend some time in Paris. The school holidays were approaching. Her two children were coming home from school, and it was her custom to take them to La Châtre and spend the autumn with her husband. At the same time she expressed a great desire that I should accompany her, and that we should return to Paris together. I was upset, and I told her that I would take until the follow-

ing morning to think the matter over. I perceived on the instant that I should go to France, and that I should return without her; but I loved her beyond everything, and I would have faced a thousand annoyances rather than allow her to take so long a journey alone.

"I arranged my affairs as best I could, so as to get a little money together. On the following day I said that I would accompany her, but that I insisted upon living alone in Paris, and did not wish to be obliged to go to La Châtre, preferring to profit from my stay in the great Capital by walking the hospitals and pursuing my professional studies. I said it somewhat sorrowfully, but decidedly, and she replied, 'My friend, you shall do as you like best.' I had understood her, and she had understood me. From that time forwards our relations were only those of friends—at least upon her side. For my own part, I was quite satisfied to be only her friend; but I felt that I was still in love with her."

So they packed and started. It is recorded that Pagello had to sell his valuables in order to pay his fare.

CHAPTER XII

Pagello in Paris : He begins to feel that he has acted foolishly : He consoles himself with the contemplation of his mother's portrait and the recollections of her moral precepts : He walks the hospitals : George Sand sees Musset again : She complains to him that Pagello is jealous : Pagello returns to Venice.

THE keen air of the boulevards began to dissipate the Venetian haze.

Paris, it is true, and not Venice, was the centre of the Romantic Movement; but Paris, even at the height of its most absurd enthusiasms, never quite loses its power of raillery. And now Paris was laughing, and, indeed, had something to laugh at. Parisians had no motive for taking the Venetian adventure seriously, and it struck them as comic. In particular Pagello, brought to Paris as a sort of living trophy of George Sand's victories, struck them as a comic figure. Some of them grinned broadly, and others smiled ironically. The handsome romantic hero, floundering through the French language, felt "out of it" in the company of the wits. At Venice he had been esteemed a Don Juan; but at Paris he was regarded as a barber's block. He began at once to feel uncomfortable, and George Sand began to feel uncomfortable too.

Her sensations at this stage, we may take it, were pretty much those of the man-about-town who has got engaged to be married to a barmaid when the hour strikes for introducing the barmaid to the ladies of his family. Such an one then realises that to take the barmaid away from the bar is like tearing a picture roughly from its frame—that she depends for her attractions on her alcoholic environment—that in a strange environment she soon ceases to be attractive. His friends assisting, he seeks a way out of the en-

tanglement, even at the cost of drawing a cheque for the cash equivalent of his affections. And the barmaid, of course, and very naturally, feels hurt. It is not her fault that she is what she is, or that the man-about-town has been deceived by the atmosphere in which he paid his court to her. She divines her mistake before she is willing to acknowledge it, and she weeps.

The parallel is almost exact. George Sand was a very close feminine analogue to the man-about-town. Pagello's position in the Romantic circle bears a very close resemblance to that of the barmaid cut adrift from familiar moorings and launched in the strange waters of a lady's drawing-room. She was ashamed of him, yet anxious to "let him down gently." He was uneasy, yet hesitated to act upon his impulses. He saw the end coming before it came, and he wept.

It was at the end of July that the lovers left Venice to cross the Simplon; and from Milan Pagello wrote to his father. The old man had reproached him for ruining his career, and (incidentally) for violating the moral code of Christianity. The son refused to excuse himself, but he said:—

"I have now reached the last stage of my madness, and I must go through it, as I went through the other stages, with my eyes shut. To-morrow I start for Paris, where I shall leave Madame Sand, and whence I shall return to embrace you and be worthy of you. I am young, and I shall be able to repair the damage done to my career. Do not cease to love me, but write to me at Paris."

So they crossed the pass from Domo d'Ossola to Brieg, and drove down the valley of the Rhone, and diverged at

Martigny to visit the Chamonix glaciers, and proceeded to Geneva.

"The farther we went," says the doctor, "the more cold and circumspect our relations became. My sufferings were great, but I tried my hardest to hide them. George Sand was a shade melancholy, but much more independent of my society. To my sorrow, I perceived in her an actress accustomed to play her part in comedies of this kind, and I began to see clearly through the veil which covered my eyes. We spent six or seven days at Geneva, and then took our seats in the diligence, and travelled by way of Champagne and Dauphiné to Paris. On our arrival, George Sand was met by one of her friends, M. Bouquereau [Boucoiran], who escorted her to her apartment on the Quai Voltaire, and conducted me to the Hôtel d'Orléans, in the Rue Petits-Augustins, where I engaged a small room on the third floor for one franc fifty centimes a day."

The Parisian garret was indeed a change after the lagoons and gondolas of Venice. The doctor tells us how he sat down in his despair, and buried his head in his hands, reflecting that he, whose passion was by no means extinct, was the victim of a caprice that had already served its turn. He also tells us how he unpacked his mother's portrait from his trunk, and covered it with kisses, and sat long in front of it, recalling the admirable moral precepts which he had learnt at his mother's knee. "All earthly joys that are incompatible with those precepts will make you unhappy," she had told him; and he found that it was so.

The reverie was cut short by a knock at the door. George Sand and Boucoiran had come to take the doctor out to dinner. He says that this material incursion upon his medi-

tations shocked and disgusted him; but that is as it may be. The dinner, at any rate, was a farewell dinner. Boucoiran was appointed to be the doctor's friend and mentor. His mistress was going to La Châtre to see her children. Perhaps she would meet him again in three months' time—and perhaps not. In the meantime she suggested that he should avail himself of the opportunity of pursuing his medical studies. "A mother," the doctor continues, "could not have spoken to me with a more reasonable affection. I was touched to the depths of my soul." And she took her departure, and left him to Boucoiran.

Neither here nor in any later passage in Pagello's statement is Alfred de Musset's name mentioned; but Musset was none the less playing his part in the drama, and not playing it only by correspondence. George Sand had returned to Paris with the full intention of seeing him again. The intention could reasonably be inferred from some of the extracts from her letters to him already given; and there is another letter in which she is absolutely explicit.

"At what date are you going to Aix? Arrange so as to let me know where you will be, in order that, if I do not see you in Paris, I may at least meet you somewhere *en route*."

And then again:—

"Yes, we shall meet in August, shall we not, whatever happens? Perhaps you will be in love with some one else by that time. I hope so, my child, and yet I have my fears. Indeed I cannot read my own heart when I foresee that. If only I could shake the hand of the woman who loves you, and tell her what care she must take of you! But she would

be jealous, and would say, 'Never speak to me of Madame Sand. She is a wicked woman.'"

Musset, on his part, wished to see her, and, at the same time, wished that he did not wish it. He had seriously tried to forget her; but he had made the mistake of keeping her acquainted with his attempts to do so. He told her, for instance, how he had been to the Opera, and how the favours of some dancing girl had been pressed upon him, and how signally her attempts to distract him had failed. He seems to have written by every mail, and always to have received an answer by return of post; and the answers, even when their tone seemed maternal, were like oil poured upon the flames. So, when George Sand reached Paris, the inevitable happened. Musset vowed that he must see her—though it were only once, and only to say good-bye. As soon as he had seen her he would go. There should be a barrier or mountains and seas between them, and he would never again return to France. But she must accord him "one hour and one last kiss."

She meant to yield, but she hesitated, and he had to appeal again. Was she afraid of hurting Pagello's feelings? Nonsense! And then—

"George, George, if you have a heart, consent to meet me somewhere—in your rooms, or in mine, or at the Jardin des Plantes, or in the cemetery, by my father's grave. It is there that I should like to bid you good-bye. Open your heart to me without *arrière-pensée*. Hear me swear that I shall die with your love in my heart. One last kiss, and then farewell! What is it that frightens you? Remember that sad evening at Venice when you told me that you had a

secret. You thought you were speaking to a silly, jealous lover. No, George, you were speaking to a friend."

Then she saw him, and did more than see him; kissed him, and did more than kiss him. Pagello was not told, and it was understood that it was to be for the last time. Only they were still to write to each other—there could be no harm in that. So Musset started for Baden, and began writing at once. A "salutary balm," he said, had been poured upon his wound; and he swore, "by my youth and my genius," that he would write a book which should link their names in a joint immortality like those of Romeo and Juliet, and Abelard and Héloïse. That would be "a marriage more sacred than those solemnised by the priest—the chaste and imperishable marriage of the intelligence." Future generations should recognise in it "the symbol of the One God they worship." For the rest, if she called him back, he would come, but, otherwise, he would stay away for ever.

She did not call him back—he did not give her time to do so. Within a fortnight he had returned without waiting to be summoned. But, in the meantime, George Sand had fled for refuge to Nohant and her family, leaving Pagello to live as he liked in his garret at 1 franc 50 centimes a day.

The three-cornered duel was now indeed developing. There was no longer any pretence at a triangular embrace. The three combatants were at three-cornered variance. Pagello, finding himself at once neglected and laughed at, had become jealous. He who had once uttered mystic sayings about "sublime links incomprehensible to the rest of the world" had not only conceived suspicions but had tried to confirm them by opening letters which were not addressed

to him. Musset who had appealed so eloquently to Pagello to make George Sand happy was now openly appealing to George Sand not to consider Pagello's feelings.

"Perhaps my return to Paris will give you a shock, and perhaps it will give *him* a shock too. I confess that I am no longer in a state to consider his or anybody's feelings. If he suffers, very well, let him suffer—this Venetian who taught me to suffer. I am paying him back the lesson which he gave me with a master hand."

That was now the attitude of the lovers towards each other; while George Sand's attitude was almost equally unsatisfactory to both of them. Sitting in the midst of her family at Nohant, she summoned her provincial friends to pity her for her emotional entanglements, but making no decided attempt to cut the knot, she declared that her life was "impossible," and talked of suicide. "When I have informed you of the state of my brain," she wrote to Boucoiran, "you will agree with me that it is merely indolence and cowardice on my part to try to live, and that I ought to have finished with it long ago." But she still held aloof from Musset, though she confided to him that she was discontented with Pagello. Pagello, she says, "lost his head as soon as he set foot in Paris"; he has become "suspicious"; he "picks quarrels about nothing, like a German." Whatever George Sand does appears to "wound and irritate him"; she herself is "hurt" by the new tone of his letters. She feels that he "no longer has faith" in her—which perhaps is not surprising; she infers that, with his faith, his love has also disappeared; and she concludes:—

"I shall see him again if he is still in Paris. I am going

back to Paris to console him ; but not to justify myself, and not to try to detain him. And yet I did love him very sincerely and seriously—this generous man, who was as romantic as I was, and whom I believed to be stronger."

She had loved him once, but she certainly did not love him now. She meant him to go, and she proposed not merely to dismiss him, but to pay his fare. So far, he had been living on the proceeds of the sale of his valuables ; he had intended to supplement his resources by selling some pictures which he had brought from Venice for the purpose. They were not readily marketable, but George Sand undertook to find a purchaser. She failed to find one, but pretended to have done so, and paid the alleged price—2500 francs—in instalments out of her own pocket.

Pagello waited for the last instalment, but did not waste his time. Boucoiran, who had been appointed to look after him, did his duty thoroughly. He took the doctor to the *Revue des deux Mondes* office, and introduced him to Buloz, who examined him carefully through his monocle, and then gave him a press pass to the theatres. He also took him to the principal hospitals and introduced him to the principal physicians, who received him with every courtesy, and gave him every facility for study. He devoted one of George Sand's instalments of 500 francs to the purchase of a case of surgical instruments, and made himself an expert in lithotrity. Even so, he says, he sometimes felt sad and lonely in his garret ; but at such hours "the portrait of my mother inspired me with words of inexpressible consolation, and I found courage to defy my poverty and the black gloom of my future."

About the middle of October George Sand arrived, and handed him the money for his journey home.

"I packed my baggage, and, two days later, I went to George Sand's rooms, where Boucoiran was waiting for me. Our farewells were silent. I pressed her hand without daring to look her in the face. She seemed perplexed. I do not know whether she suffered, but my presence embarrassed her. She was bored by this Italian who, with his simple sound sense, broke down the mysterious sublimity with which she was accustomed to envelop the fact that she was tired of her amours. I had already given her to understand that I had sounded the depths of her heart, and found it full of excellent qualities, but marred by many faults. This discovery of mine could not but cause her annoyance, so I cut the visit as short as I could. I kissed her children, and took the arm of Boucoiran."

It was over, and Pagello passes out of the story—a grotesque, but an honest, and not altogether unsympathetic figure. His experiences had been, in a way, an education to him. He had made a fool of himself and he knew it. The atmosphere of Romanticism was too rare for him; but he had had to breathe it in order to discover that it did not suit him. Even in Italy—even at Venice—all is not romance; there is a Philistia even of the lagoons. The doctor's place was there, as a general practitioner, and he returned to it—but not to boast. That resolution is recorded in a farewell letter to Musset's friend, Alfred Tattet, who had shown him some politeness.

"Before I go, my good friend, I send you a greeting. I beg you never to breathe a word about my amour with *la George*. I have no wish to avenge myself. I depart with

the certainty that I have behaved as an honest man. That will enable me to forget my suffering and my poverty. Good-bye, my angel! I will write to you from Venice. Good-bye, good-bye!"

So he departed, and eventually prospered, achieving a great reputation for his skill in lithotrity, and long maintaining the silence which he had imposed on himself. He was calumniated, but he did not reply. The Sandists and the Mussetists fell out, and pelted each other with pamphlets, and the air was dark with controversy. The wrangle was conducted without reference to Pagello's feelings. By both sides alike he was held up to contempt and ridicule. But he acted on the old Scottish maxim: "They say. What say they? Let them say." Not until the protagonists were dead and the quarrel belonged to history, did he permit himself to speak; and then he spoke well of both of them, and even told a professional lie about the nature of his rival's malady.

If he was a fool, he was also a gentleman. One cannot but conclude with that tribute to his memory.

CHAPTER XIII

Further correspondence between George Sand and Musset : He is ill and asks her to visit him : She wishes to renew the old relations but finds him unwilling : Sainte-Beuve intercedes for her in vain : She cuts off her hair and sends it to Musset : She also sends him her private diary : The renewal of love.

THE path was now clear for Alfred de Musset. George Sand was once again his mistress—and yet neither of them was happy. They had thought to forgive and forget; but jealousy was stronger than love, and visions of Venice rose between them, mocking them. At once we find George Sand complaining bitterly of Musset's reproaches.

"I was quite sure," she says, "that those reproaches would be heard on the morrow of the happiness which we had dreamed and promised ourselves." But he has no right to try to make her lift the veil from her past relations with Pagello, and it is her duty to be silent. "Do you think," she asks, "that I should have answered him if *he* had questioned me about the secrets of *our* pillow?" This past had "exalted" him "like a beautiful poem" during their separation; now that they were lovers again, it was a nightmare. She had forseen that it would be so. Wherefore—

"We are going to be more unhappy than ever. . . . I did not want to love you again. I had suffered too much for that. Ah! if I were a mere coquette, you would not feel so miserable. What I ought to do is to lie to you, and say, 'I did not love Pietro; I never was his mistress.' Who would there be to prevent you from believing me? Your pain is only due to my straightforwardness."

Musset's answer is humble, yet passionate. Never mind

about the past! He loves "as no one has ever loved before." He begs her pardon on his knees, though he knows he does not deserve to be forgiven. He doubts if love has ever given happiness. And he is ill—in his mother's house. Can she not come and see him—when his mother is out? Some mutual friend—Papet or Rollinat—might bring her.

She is moved, and thinks it might be arranged—provided she comes in disguise: "Your sister does not know me by sight, and your mother would pretend not to see me. I could pass for a sick-nurse." Madame Lardin de Musset told M. Mariéton that she actually did come, dressed as a servant, and sat up all night at his bedside; and when he recovered he returned to her, in spite of the warnings of Tattet and other friends, and sent a challenge to Gustave Planche, whose spiteful comments on their renewed relations had reached his ears.

Planche denied having gossiped as reported, and the duel did not take place; but fresh cause for gossip was very quickly given. Their reunion only lasted for a few days. A proposal that they should go away and live together at Fontainebleau fell through. They went away, but separately—Musset to Montbard in Burgundy, George Sand to Nohant. This time they both believed that all was really over for ever, and they both wrote to their friends to that effect. Musset confided in Tattet, and George Sand in Boucoiran, to whom she wrote from the country:—

"I am getting on pretty well. I have my distractions, and shall not return to Paris until I am cured and strong again. It is wrong of you to speak to me as you do of Alfred's proceedings. Say nothing about him if you love me, and rest assured that all is finally over between us."

"For ever" in this case meant "for a week." At the end of the week George Sand was back in Paris, more in love than ever, determined to see Musset, who, on his part, was determined to be firm and to refuse. Accustomed to triumph, she now fell into despair, and became capable of desperate acts. She cut off all her hair, made a parcel of it, and forwarded it to her lover; but though he wept over the gift, he did not yield. The persuasions of his friends overcame the solicitations of his mistress.

She then haunted the studio of Delacroix, who was painting a portrait of Musset for the *Revue des deux Mondes*, and Delacroix's Journal records his impatience at her lamentations. She also complained to Sainte-Beuve, and he too gave her distress less attention than she thought that it deserved. She accuses him of neglecting her because he has let two days pass without calling to receive her confidences; but she proceeds to confess on paper—

"I am less resigned than ever. I go out, I seek distractions, I shake myself out of my lethargy, but when I return to my room in the evening I become mad.

"Yesterday my legs carried me in spite of myself, and I went to call on *him*. Happily I did not find him at home. I know that he is cold and angry when he speaks of me. All that I fail to understand is what it is that he accuses me of, and in relation to whom. This injustice is devouring my heart. It is frightful that we should separate over such matters as these.

"And not a word—nothing to show that he remembers me. He grows impatient, and laughs at me for not going away! Oh, my God! Advise me to kill myself. That is all that is left for me to do."

A fresh mood succeeds. George Sand is now too proud to write to Alfred; but none the less, for her own satisfaction, she must pretend to write to him. So she begins a *Journal Intime*, and confides her troubles to that. She writes that she is still beautiful in spite of her shorn locks, and that she is tempted to go to Alfred's door and ring his bell till the cord breaks. She writes that she has been to the Théâtre des Italiens, and has been paid many compliments, and has been indifferent to them. She appeals to God, and even proposes a bargain. If God will give her back her lover, she will go to church regularly for the future—she will wear out the altar steps with her knees. Then she relates that she has called on all her literary and artistic friends, and consulted with them about love.

"Liszt told me this evening that only God was worthy to be loved. It may be so, but it is very difficult to love God when one is in love with a man. It is such a different sort of love. It is true that Liszt added that, in all his life, he had never felt any lively sympathy for any one but M. de Lamennais. He is a lucky man is that little Christian! I saw Heine this morning. He told me that one only loved with the head and the senses, and that the heart had very little to do with the matter. At two o'clock I saw Madame Allart. She told me that one must be cunning with men, and pretend to be angry in order to win them back. Sainte-Beuve was the only one who did not hurt my feelings, and did not say something silly. I asked him what love was, and he replied, 'Love resides in tears; you weep, and therefore you love.' Ah yes, my poor friend, I love. It is in vain that I call anger to my aid. I love, and I shall die of love, unless God performs a miracle, and either gives me literary

ambition or makes me religious. I must go and see Sister Martha."

It is characteristically and supremely French. If we could imagine the greatest English authoress of the day (whoever that may be), with a similar past behind her, discussing the state of her heart in the office of, say, the *Fortnightly Review*, with any of the contributors who happened to be present, reporting progress daily to the editor, and imploring him to intercede for her, and then jumping into a cab and driving off to ask advice from, say, Mr. Paderewski, Mr. Swinburne, and the Countess of Warwick, we should have an approximately exact English parallel, inadequate only because insufficiently absurd. But George Sand, of course, could no more see that anything that she did was absurd than she could admit that anything that she did was wrong.

She proceeds to recall the memories of Venice. Musset had left her, but at least he wrote to her ; and she vows that she kissed his letters, and watered them with her tears, and hid them in her bosom "when the other was not looking." And she had knelt, shivering, on the cold pavements of Parisian churches, and prayed. She had heard voices in answer to her prayers. "Confess and die," said a voice in the Church of Saint Sulpice. "Alas!" she comments, "I did go to confession on the following morning, and yet I could not die." She is condemned to live and suffer.

"Cruel boy, why did you love me after having hated me? What mysterious miracle is it that is worked in you every week? What is the meaning of this *crescendo* of dislike, disgust, aversion, fury, and cold contemptuous raillery? And then, of a sudden, those tears, that pain, that ineffable love returning! Torment of my life! Accursed love! I would

give all that I have if it might but come back for a day. But *never! never!* It is too terrible. I cannot believe it. I am coming to you. I am coming. But no. I may cry, and lament aloud, but come to you I must not. Sainte-Beuve forbids."

Sainte-Beuve, one gathers from this, had refused to intercede, though he presently yielded to pressure and entreaty, and conveyed the message, supporting George Sand's suit with a few eloquent words of his own. But all in vain. This was the answer which he received :—

"I am very much obliged to you, my friend, for the interest which you have been good enough to take, in the present melancholy circumstances, in me and in the person of whom you spoke to me to-day. It is no longer possible for me, under any pretext whatsoever, to continue any sort of relation with her, whether by writing or otherwise. I hope that her friends will not see in this decision any offensive intention, or any wish to prefer any kind of accusation against her. If anyone should be accused in the matter it is myself, who, in unreasoning weakness, consented to visits which, as you yourself say, were fraught with great danger. Madame Sand knows perfectly well what my present intentions are, and if it is she who has asked you to tell me not to see her again, I confess that I am at a loss to understand her reasons for so doing, seeing that, no longer ago than yesterday evening, she was emphatically refused admission to the house."

So that attempt came to nothing. Musset consented to see George Sand—but nothing more. She divined, however, what was his weakness and what his strength. He pretended to be jealous of Liszt, but she saw through the pretence. "If

you were capable of being jealous of these people," she said, "I would send them all packing at once." In reality, she is sure, it is the fear of public opinion that holds him aloof from her: "Poor Alfred! How readily you would forgive me, if only no one knew about it!" And then she vows that she will do without his love, if only he will accord her his respect. She will earn that respect by seeking the society of distinguished men—Delacroix, Berlioz, Meyerbeer. And then—

"When I have lived this quiet and honourable life long enough to prove that I can lead it, I will come, my love, and ask you to let me take your hand. I will not torment you with jealousies and useless persecutions. I know well enough that when love is finished, it is finished. But I must have your friendship to support the love that is in my heart, and to prevent it from killing me. If only I had it to-day! Alas! in what a hurry I am to have it! How much good it would do me! If I only had a few lines in your handwriting from time to time! A word, and permission to send you from time to time a little picture bought for four sous on the quays, some cigarettes that I had rolled, a bird, a toy. How it would relieve me of my pain and my *ennui* if I could imagine that you thought of me a little when you received such silly trifles from me! No, this is not calculation, prudence, fear of what people will say. Good God, no! it is not that. I tell my story to everyone. People know it, and discuss it, and laugh at me, and it is little that I care about that."

They saw each other after that; they even dined together. Musset boasted to her that he had now another mistress, and she abased herself, and heard the news humbly. "May she teach him to believe!" she exclaimed. "I have only taught

him to deny." And then she invokes the "blue eyes" that will never again look into hers, and the "warm lissome little body" that she will never again hold in her arms, and goes, as usual, to the Scriptures for an illustration: "Never again will you touch my hand, as Jesus touched the hand of the daughter of Jairus, saying, 'Damsel, I say unto thee, Arise.'"

The thought of suicide recurred to her; she says that it was only the thought of her children that saved her from it. "Maurice!" she exclaims, "I want you to read this some day, and see how much I loved." And then she speaks of a day on which Musset made an appointment and did not keep it. She had sat waiting for him from eleven in the morning until midnight, "starting every time I heard the bell ring." Though she has lost his heart, she is sure that he still loves her "with the senses." But he wants her to go. Very well. She has always a place of refuge among friends at Nohant.

She departed to Nohant, and spent a month there. She wrote to Sainte-Beuve to say that she was finding peace. Alfred had sent her an affectionate letter "repenting of his violence," and proving that "his heart is good." But he does not love her, and she does not want to see him—"it hurts me too much." It will be very hard to refuse him an interview if he asks for one; but she thinks that she will have the strength.

And so forth. The mood lasted for a month. But at the end of the month she was once more in Paris; and the remainder of the story—of this chapter of it, at all events—is best told in the letter which she wrote to Alfred Tattet, who had done more than anyone else to keep her and her lover apart, on January 14, 1835.

"SIR,—There are some very skilful surgical operations

which reflect great credit on the surgeon, but do not prevent the recurrence of the disease. In accordance with that possibility Alfred has once more become my lover. As I suppose that he will be very pleased to meet you in my apartment, I invite you to dine with us on the first day on which you are disengaged. I hope our friendship will be restored by my readiness to forget the wrong you did me. Adieu, my dear Tattet.—Always yours,

"GEORGE SAND."

CHAPTER XIV

George Sand and Musset find life together impossible : They agree to part, and George Sand retires to Nohant : The fate of their letters.

TRUE love was dead; true love had been betrayed to its death at Venice. Passion remained; but passion did not suffice. It might mask memories and silence recriminations for the moment; but the memories recurred, and with them recurred jealousies and reproaches. Violence had been done to love; and the lovers had, as it were, the shadow of a crime between them—a crime which they could not cancel, but must expiate. And expiation is a solitary act. *Quisque suos patimur manes.* We must each dree our own weirds, not only for ourselves, but by ourselves.

That is the reason why George Sand's triumph was brief. We do not know exactly how many days it lasted; but we do know that it lasted less than a week. Six days after addressing her bulletin of victory to Tattet we find her acknowledging her defeat to Liszt.

"I am going away to try to put an end to a passion which is very serious to me, and very terrible. I doubt whether it will be of any use, for every day of my passion as it passes makes me more sceptical of my free will. I rely upon you to do me this justice—to admit that, even in the days of my greatest suffering, I brought no accusations against the author of my distress. As I have told you, I alone am to blame, and am paying the penalty of a very great fault. In running away from a forgiveness that would be too humiliating to me, I prove my weakness, not my strength."

The actual end was not quite yet; the fight for happiness was to be continued for some ten weeks longer. But the

issue of it was no longer doubtful, and was always before their eyes. We may spare ourselves the details. The expressions of passion, alternately exultant and despairing, become monotonous even when the agony is that of a man and a woman of genius. Each in turn threatens to quit the other; each in turn implores the other not to go. Resolutions to depart are formed, and broken, and formed again. At last it is George Sand who takes the irrevocable step, running away, with the connivance of Boucoiran, for fear lest she should find herself deserted. Three letters present the picture of the final crisis.

On March 5, 1835, George Sand wrote to Boucoiran as follows:

"My Friend,—You must help me to get away to-day. Go to the coach office at midday, and engage a place for me. Then come and see me, and I will tell you what to do.

"And yet, in case I cannot tell you,—for Alfred is uneasy in his mind, and I shall have great difficulty in deceiving him,—I will explain the matter to you in a few words. You must arrive at my rooms at five o'clock, with the air of a man who is very busy and in a great hurry, and tell me that my mother has just arrived, is very tired and somewhat ill and wants to see me at once, and that I must go to her without delay. I shall put on my hat and tell you that I shall return, and you will see me into a carriage. Come and fetch my bag in the course of the day. It will be easy for you to take it away without being seen, and you must carry it to the coach office. . . . Good-bye. Come at once, if you can. But if you find Alfred at the house, do not give him the impression that you have anything par-

ticular to say to me. I will come out into the kitchen to speak to you."

This arrangement was carried out; and on March 9, we find Musset, still in the dark, writing thus to Boucoiran:

"SIR,—I have just left Madame Sand's apartment, and have been told that she is at Nohant. Will you be so kind as to inform me whether this is so? As you saw Madame Sand this morning, you must know what were her plans, and if it was her intention not to start until to-morrow, you may perhaps be able to tell me whether you think that she has any reasons for preferring not to see me before her departure. I need not add that, if that were the case, I should respect her wishes.

"ALFRED DE MUSSET."

But George Sand, as it happened, was already at Nohant and writing to Boucoiran to report her arrival.

"MY FRIEND,—Here I am at Châteauroux, at three o'clock in the afternoon, in good health, and not in the least fatigued. I saw all our friends of La Châtre yesterday. Rollinat travelled with me from Châteauroux, and I dined with him at Duteil's. I am going to get to work for Buloz. I am very calm. I have done my duty. The only thing that troubles me is the state of Alfred's health. Give him news of me, and tell me, without altering or extenuating anything, whether he displayed indifference, indignation, or annoyance on hearing the tidings of my departure. I am very much concerned to know the truth, though nothing can avail to alter my determination."

Boucoiran, replying to this, appears not to have contented himself with a sober statement of facts, but to have added

comments unfavourable to Musset's conduct and character. For this George Sand reproved him, adding—

"To regret is not the same thing as to despise. Besides, I am not going to do either the one thing or the other. I cannot regret the stormy and unhappy life that I leave behind me, and I cannot despise a man with whose conduct in all honourable relations I am so well acquainted. I have reasons enough for making my escape from him without inventing imaginary ones. I merely asked you to inform me of his health and of the effect which my departure had had upon him. You told me that he was well, and that he did not appear to be upset. That is all that I wished to know, and it is the most satisfactory news that I could receive. My only wish was to part from him without causing him distress."

That was really the end; and our only question is whether George Sand, in her heart of hearts, intended it to be so. Her biographers have, almost without exception, assumed that she did; but there nevertheless is room for doubt. Almost her last act before leaving Paris was to give that *Journal Intime* from which we have made so many quotations to Boucoiran, with instructions to hand it to Musset after her departure. It is conceivable, of course, that she merely desired his opinion of it as a literary composition; but the hypothesis is not very persuasive. The more credible inference is that she wished, if not exactly to open the door to yet another reconciliation, at least to leave it ajar. The upshot showed that she had staked less than her lover in this love-duel, and therefore she may well have been willing to continue staking longer. If any advance was intended, however, Musset ignored it. He had paid heavily for his lesson, but at last he had learnt it;

and his ultimate attitude may be said to have been summed up in the titles of two of his comedies: "On ne badine pas avec l'amour," and "Il faut qu'une porte soit ouverte ou fermée."

There was no quarrel in the vulgar sense of the word. The quarrelling belonged to a later date, and then it was not so much George Sand and Alfred de Musset who quarrelled as their respective friends and champions. The principals themselves did not wish, and indeed could hardly afford, to quarrel. They had loved too well; they had behaved too badly; they had shared too many secrets. Having proved beyond the possibility of argument that it was out of their power to make each other happy, they had only one course open to them: to let the dead past bury its dead if it could, and set their faces separately and sternly towards the future, putting their trust in Time, the great physician.

George Sand at least was soon persuaded that time had done its healing work. In May 1836 she wrote to Liszt:—

"I have not seen Musset, and I don't know whether he ever thinks of me except when he wants to earn a hundred crowns by writing poetry for the *Revue des deux Mondes*. For my own part, I have long ceased to think of him, and I will even tell you that, in that sense, I do not think of anyone. I am happier as I am than I have ever been in the whole course of my life. Old age is coming upon me. My need for great emotions is more than satisfied."

She was mistaken—even about herself. Other great emotions were in store for her; and when she had passed through them, she was to remember Musset yet again. And about him she was even more mistaken. He built her, as he had promised, "an altar with his bones,"—his "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle,"—in which he told the story of their love,

and took all the blame for its tragic issue upon himself. But that did not cure him. As late as 1841 he was still lamenting over his memories in verse. He had been to Fontainebleau and been reminded of the past, and he wrote the "Souvenir" which ends—

"Je me dis seulement : A cette heure, en ce lieu,
Un jour je fus aimé, j'aimais, elle était belle.
J'enfouis ce trésor dans mon âme immortelle,
Et je l'emporte à Dieu !"

Literary Paris being much smaller than literary London, it was inevitable that they should meet from time to time. They met at the theatre, and at a Saint-Simonian gathering. Once, in 1837, they spent together "six hours of brotherly and sisterly intimacy." They even corresponded occasionally, and sent their friends to each other with letters of introduction. But there was no renewal of the old relations, and no proposal on either side that they should be renewed. They had learnt to know each other too well, and they respected the incompatibilities which had proved too strong for them.

The one practical question which remained to be settled was : Should they return or should they keep each other's letters ? It seems a simple question ; and yet—chiefly, one must suppose, because both the lovers felt it to be a question which would eventually have a literary interest—it dragged on for several years.

In 1848 all the correspondence was, by mutual agreement, consigned to the care of Gustave Papet, who placed the letters in sealed envelopes and locked them away. Seven or eight years later it was proposed that they should be restored to their respective writers. But the envelopes containing them

were exactly alike, and Papet no longer knew which envelopes contained George Sand's letters and which Musset's. The proposal that the envelopes should be opened and their contents sorted by confidential representatives of the writers fell through because one of the confidential representatives failed to keep the appointment; and when Musset died, in 1857, Papet handed all the envelopes to George Sand. Paul de Musset then asked that his brother's letters should be sent to him. George Sand refused to part with them, but offered to burn them in his presence. An appointment was made for the purpose, but Paul de Musset did not come to Nohant as he had promised, and George Sand remained in possession of the letters. Later, when she had stirred the embers of controversy by writing "Elle et Lui" and Paul de Musset had replied by writing his version of the story in "Lui et elle," she proposed to publish them, but was dissuaded by Sainte-Beuve; and it was not until after her death that extracts from them began to appear in various French newspapers, reviews, and magazines.

CHAPTER XV

George Sand's influence on Alfred de Musset : His moral decline and fall : George Sand's distress · The secret of her strength : She appeals to Sainte-Beuve to pray for her.

ALFRED DE MUSSET was very hard hit. His case was like that of the wounded soldier who, though his scars have healed, carries a bullet in his body, and is reminded of its presence by sharp pangs as often as the weather changes.

The literary influence of his passion is not to be denied. Critics as well as biographers have to distinguish between "the Musset before Italy" and "the Musset after George Sand." His sufferings narrowed his compass, but made his note more intense. A new poet arose from the ashes of the old: the singer *par excellence* of the love that sears the heart —the singer who cries—

> "Dieu parle, il faut qu'on lui réponde.
> Le seul bien qui me reste au monde
> Est d'avoir quelquefois pleuré."

He had been born with a passion for tears and for the luxury of woe—a tendency to seek and the ability to find a voluptuous delight in suffering. He would assuredly have been "sad as night only for wantonness" in the absence of any more compelling reason. George Sand gave him the reason he lacked, and so made his pain poignant and his melancholy sincere. To that extent we may say that she helped him, and served literature in doing so. It is not necessary to believe, with the enthusiasts, that he continued to love her until his dying day, or, with Madame Karénine, that he never ceased to recognise her as the noblest of all the women whom he had known. What he continued to love was the illusion of which she had robbed him, and the ideal

which she had failed to realise. Just as a man's power of hearing may be worn out by too much noise, so Musset's heart was worn out by too tempestuous futilities.

It was not merely the poet but the man himself who was transfigured by the passionate experience. To Sainte-Beuve, when he met him at the "Cénacle," the Musset before Italy had seemed the very personification of the Spring. The Musset after George Sand was self-contained, unapproachable, *blasé*, and a cynic. By the time he was four-and-twenty his ideals had been expelled by memories. He had many mistresses, but he lost his heart to none of them, having no longer any heart to lose. That is what we have to remember when we come to consider whether George Sand's influence on him was good or evil. It is the more important to remember it because so many biographers, from Miss Bertha Thomas to Madame Karénine, have insisted that George Sand was not only a great writer, but also a good woman, a prophetess, a moral force.

Of George Sand as prophetess and preacher it will be opportune to say something presently. Perhaps we shall have to class her with the paradoxical personages who have influenced the world for good, but have influenced individuals for evil. It is, at any rate, certain that, from any but the purely literary point of view, it would have been better for Alfred de Musset if he had never known her. Not all his faults, of course, can be laid at her door; from some of them, indeed, she even seemed, for a time, to have delivered him. Some of his dissolute habits were temporarily abandoned at her instance after his attack of delirium tremens. So far, so good. But she also gave him the spectacle of the best of women (as he imagined) behaving like the worst, and so destroyed his faith in women.

She behaved as lightly and as loosely as any grisette, and so did more harm than it would have been possible for a grisette to do. From women of that class a man expects so little that he cannot easily be disappointed. They are the foils of the women of a better class; the contrast is noted, and is found instructive. They do not embellish infidelity with fine phrases; they deceive but few; they leave little trace upon the lives through which they pass. Love is not slain by their levity, and the ideal remains untouched. In the case of George Sand it was the ideal itself that was attacked. She had education, breeding, talent—and she behaved, at Venice, as we have seen. It was impossible for her lover to say, "No matter! What else could one expect from a grisette?" His deduction was bound to be that "every woman is a grisette at heart."

He did not want to draw that inference; but he was at last compelled to do so. His new *credo* is placed in the mouth of one of his characters in "On ne badine pas avec l'amour."

"Farewell, Camille. Go back to your convent; and when they tell you these hideous stories which have poisoned your mind, answer them in these words: 'All men are liars, inconstant, false, babblers, hypocrites, haughty, cowardly, contemptible and sensual; all women are perfidious, affected, vain, avid of new sensations, and depraved. Yet there is one thing in the world which is holy and sublime—the union of two of these imperfect and terrible beings. One is often deceived in love, often hurt, and often made unhappy—but one loves; and on the brink of the grave one looks back, and says to oneself, *I suffered much; I was deceived sometimes; but I loved. It was I who lived, and not some factitious being, the creature of my pride and my tedium.*'"

"All women are perfidious, affected, vain, avid of new sensations, and depraved,"—that is the significant generalisation. A man's generalisations about men tell us little; they may be merely petulant, merely dyspeptic, merely literary. A man's generalisations about women tell us what sort of women he has known most intimately. The man who has loved a good woman does not blaspheme against womanhood, even if he has loved in vain. The type of the blasphemer is perhaps Alfred de Vigny, betrayed by Marie Dorval—the woman whom George Sand called "sublime." Alfred de Musset blasphemed less loudly, but for very similar reasons—because he had lost not only hope but faith.

The end was, as all the world knows, that he became a habitual drunkard—the common end of the lonely man who has found out the vanity of passion, and has learnt to believe in nothing else. Many painful stories are told of his decline and fall. Princesse Mathilde invited him one day to her house, and he arrived, not "on the viewless wings of poesy," but "charioted by Bacchus and his pards." "He showed a want of tact," was the Princess's comment, and she did not ask him again. He played chess in the Café de la Régence, and played very well; but it was a recognised fact that, after a certain hour in the evening, he no longer remembered the moves. To persuade him to leave the café at closing time an ingenious device had to be adopted. A glass of absinthe was prepared for him, and held just out of his reach. He rose to lay hold of it, and it was withdrawn still farther. He advanced again, and so, following the green demon, staggered at last into his carriage.

Evidently we must not hold George Sand responsible for all that: such responsibilities are not to be so lightly shifted. Men had proved—and other men were yet to prove—that it

was possible to love her, to leave her, and yet to remain sober, facing the world with courage and composure. Even in that age of degenerates, Alfred de Musset was exceptionally weak. Only it is precisely to weak men that good women can be most helpful, and it is to them too that the women who betray the ideal can do most harm. Though a woman be in favour of all the minor virtues, her good influence will not survive the hour of passion unless she maintains certain ideals untarnished. That is where George Sand failed; and that is what the enthusiasts forget.

Nothing has been more often quoted than her professions of "motherliness" towards her lovers. Sometimes she aspired to be their mother; sometimes their "sister of mercy." It is impossible to read the story of the Venetian episode and not to hold that, when she spoke thus, she was covering her infidelities by the profane use of sacred words, and so adding to her offence. The influence of a woman who talked as she talked, while acting as she acted, was not the influence that could give a weak man strength to resist temptation. One is not, indeed, justified in saying that she drove Musset to besotted courses, for he entered upon such courses far too easily. One is justified in saying that, if she had been a better woman, she might have saved him from them.

The separation from Musset, however, was a crisis in her life no less than his. She had loved him—after her fashion; and she had not come unscathed out of the ordeal; she had escaped, but she had left "a goodly portion of herself" behind. But she was stronger than Musset, and of a better balanced temperament. Somewhere beneath her extravagances there was a substratum of sanity—a reserve force, as it were, which she could draw upon in the hour of need. There is a

Scriptural saying which one can invert and apply to her: She could not save others, but she could save herself.

Probably the chief secret of her salvation lay in her sound physical health. Her constitution could resist her excesses in coffee and tobacco; she did not test it with absinthe and champagne. Moreover, she had been bred in the country, and was continually returning to the country. Whereas Alfred de Musset, at moments of supreme emotion, fled for refuge to the café, she fled for refuge to Nohant. Instead of masking her symptoms with stimulants and excitements, she repaired her powers and recovered her energies in a healthy climate amid healthy surroundings. She felt well there, and that was the first step towards mental convalescence. Bruised and broken, she regained strength by frequent contact with Mother Earth.

That was what had happened before; that was what was to happen now. On her arrival at Nohant, she had to be treated for some disorder of the liver; and disorders of the liver, as is well known, darken everyone's outlook upon life. The malady yielded to treatment, and the outlook upon life grew brighter. A comparative calm succeeded the storm, and George Sand could sit down, with her family and her friends about her, and try to rearrange her life.

So far, one must repeat, she had lived frankly and fearlessly, after the style of a grisette. "Dans un grenier qu'on est bien à vingt ans," is equally recalled by her experiment with Sandeau and her adventure with Pagello. Probably it is only because of the accident that she was able to earn money that one is not also reminded of "J'ai su plus tard qui payait ses toilettes"; for, as we have seen, she certainly had not always scrupled to entertain simultaneously an *amant en titre* and an *amant de cœur*.

She had resembled the grisettes too in her refusal to know respectable people for fear that she should not get on with them. We have seen her leaving P.P.C. cards upon her bourgeois friends before plunging into the riotous life of the Latin Quarter. It had been the same when the acquaintance of new friends, not of Bohemia, was proposed to her. We have the letter in which she declined the introduction which Sainte-Beuve pressed upon her to Jouffroy.* She says in so many words that Jouffroy is "too respectable" for her—that he would not approve of her, and that they would not understand each other. It would be "like introducing a cannibal to a man who refused to believe that anyone had ever eaten human flesh."

Her ideal had been like that of the Libertines of Geneva, who memorialised their Government with a demand that they should be allowed to "live as they chose without reference to the preachers." For years she had lived as she chose, obeying her instincts, and sanctifying them with holy names. Her life and her writings had run upon closely parallel lines. Writings and life alike had justified the cynic's remark, already quoted, that "in George Sand, when a woman wants to change her lover, God is always there to facilitate the transfer." There had been ecstasies, but no continuity, and no abiding satisfaction. She felt the need at last of a star by which to steer—of a moral pivot on which her life might hinge.

Sainte-Beuve was once again called in as her confidant, her confessor, the director of her conscience. We find her appealing to him for a religion—or, in default of a religion, for an ideal—or at least for some noble purpose worthy of "these lightnings on my brow, these flames of my genius, these

* An Ultramontanist pressman, also known as an inventor. He invented the central rail used on mountain lines.

passionate forces of my soul." She is suffering, she tells him, the chastisement of her sins; she has been led astray by "the sophisms of men and books." God has discouraged her. Can her terrible malady be cured?

"That is what I do not know, and that is what I am resolved to find out by employing all the strength that is left to me in repairing the harm I have done. If I fail, I would rather blow my brains out than recommence the life which I have been living during the last two or three years."

Love, it appears,—yet another love,—has been suggested as the remedy; but it will not serve. The case is far too desperate.

"The bare idea of such a love as you depict to me appears to me as a thing not to be realised, and I shall use all my energy in trying not to realise it. No, no, neither that sort of love nor the other—neither the tender love that lasts, nor the blind and violent love of passion. Do you think that I am capable of inspiring the former, or that I care to experience the latter? Both kinds of love are beautiful and precious, but I am too old for either."

What then? She can only wait upon Providence, in the hope that Providence will presently send her "some means of doing good," and that she may learn "to renounce voluntarily the satisfaction of personal desires."

"It is a hard and a rough task. I do not quite see the object of it, but I suppose it has one; and if it does no good, at least it can do no harm. If I succeed, I will tell you how the treatment has affected me, and whether I feel better. I should like my children to have a mother worthy of their

respect. . . . Ah! if only I were sure that virtue is what I once dreamed it to be, how quickly I would return to it—I who am conscious of so much energy that I do not know how to use! But where am I to turn for this desire, this faith, this hope? Pray for me, if God will listen to you; pray for all the unfortunate."

It cannot be determined for certain whether Sainte-Beuve prayed for George Sand or not. What we do know for certain is that relief came to her, not from him but from Michel de Bourges.

CHAPTER XVI

Michel de Bourges : He acts as George Sand's advocate in a demand for judicial separation from her husband : The hearing of the suit : Speeches of Counsel : Disagreement of the Tribunal : The matter settled out of court : The rights and wrongs considered.

LOUIS-CHRYSOSTOM MICHEL was an advocate in practice at Bourges. Hence the style Michel de Bourges—his common appellation though not his actual name. On the first occasion on which George Sand met him, they sat talking in an inn parlour till four o'clock in the morning, and then went out to continue the conversation in the moonlit streets of a provincial town. She wrote to her half-brother Hippolyte that her new friend was "of the solid stuff of which tribunes of the people are made," and that, if there were a revolution, he would be heard of.

The Revolution was thirteen years off; and when it came, Michel de Bourges was only to play an insignificant part in it. In 1835, however, he was a man of tireless energy and fiery eloquence—an earlier Gambetta, who seemed destined to pass, with the triumph of the Republic, from the Bar to the Chamber, and from the Chamber to the Cabinet; and George Sand hung upon his words, and suffered herself, though not quite without resistance, to be indoctrinated. But her relations with him were of a twofold character. He was her teacher, and became her lover; he was also, and at the same time, her legal representative in the action for a judicial separation which she brought, in the course of 1835, against her husband. The two stories, being distinct, must be kept separate; and the latter story may be taken first.

Casimir Dudevant, as we have seen, had accepted an equivocal situation. He was satisfied to leave his wife free

to live her own life in her own way, provided that he, on his part, enjoyed an equal liberty. She was welcome to seek happiness in the society of poets on condition that he was allowed to seek it in the arms of chambermaids. These mutual concessions made, they corresponded amicably, and almost affectionately. While George Sand was in Italy with Musset, she received letters from her husband, exhorting her not to forget to visit the battlefields on which her father had distinguished himself; and M. Dudevant even carried complaisance to the point of inviting Pagello to visit his house.

There were other causes of discord, however, which generally led to quarrels whenever George Sand went to stay at Nohant. They quarrelled about money; for M. Dudevant squandered his wife's substance in riotous living, or frittered it away in injudicious investments. They quarrelled about the children; for a certain chambermaid with whom M. Dudevant was improperly intimate presumed to birch Solange. They quarrelled finally because M. Dudevant insisted upon being master in his own house, and asserted his rights with drunken truculence in the presence of the servants and of guests. It became increasingly clear that the partial separation already arranged would not suffice to keep the peace. For that purpose there must be a total separation; and the property must be strictly tied up, in order that the inheritance of Maurice and Solange might not be dissipated.

Hippolyte, and some other friends of the family, tried to arrange the separation amicably. An agreement was signed whereby M. Dudevant was to leave Nohant, and receive an allowance from his wife of £152 a year in addition to his personal income of £48 a year; but M. Dudevant repudiated his signature, and remained at Nohant, where, in the course of a few days, a violent scene brought matters to a head. As

M. Dudevant never contradicted the version of it that was given in evidence in the Law Courts, we may fairly credit the statements to which the witnesses deposed.

There had been, it appears, a small dinner-party. When the coffee was served, it was discovered that the cream had been forgotten, and M. Dudevant told Maurice to go and fetch it. The boy, instead of obeying, crossed the room and sat down by his mother, who asked him if he had not heard what his father had said. Thereupon M. Dudevant lost his temper, and violently reproached his wife for not teaching her children how to behave. George Sand, not wishing the children to witness her disputes with their father, told Maurice to leave the room. At this M. Dudevant became furious, and, shouting "Get out of the room yourself!" endeavoured to strike his wife. The guests had to intervene for her protection. He ran to fetch a gun from the adjoining room, and returned, threatening to kill her, with the result that the guests interposed again, and wrested the weapon from his hands.

That was the last straw. Tempers were at white heat on both sides. George Sand would listen to no proposals of reconciliation, but hastened to her lawyers, and commenced her suit on October 30, 1835; while her husband started for Paris, apparently intending to let judgment be given against him by default. "He has cleared off," George Sand wrote to her friend the Comtesse d'Agoult, "leaving me mistress of the field. . . . I am receiving no one, but am living the life of a nun while awaiting the issue of my case, on which my livelihood in my old age depends."

She had to wait a good deal longer than she expected, however; for M. Dudevant had taken counsel with his mother, and his mother had advised him to enter an appearance and fight the case. The Tribunal decided against him in his

absence in January 1836; but he appealed, on technical grounds, against the ruling of the Court in the course of the following April, and it was ordered that the case should be heard again at La Châtre on May 10.

Not the least of George Sand's trials was that, pending the hearing, she had to live a quiet and circumspect life, for fear lest any transgression of the conventions should be noted and used against her in evidence. At first she remained at Nohant, where, she wrote to Madame d'Agoult, "four thousand fools imagine that I am on my knees, in sackcloth and ashes, weeping for my sins, like the Magdalen. But," she added, "their awakening will be terrible. On the morrow of my victory I shall throw away my crutches, and gallop round the town on horseback."

The rule was, however, that women in George Sand's circumstances must live in the house of some discreet chaperon, appointed by the President of the Court; and to this rule George Sand had to conform. The chaperon appointed was Madame Agasta Duteil, her intimate personal friend, and the wife of a local lawyer. For months she found herself condemned to this bourgeois existence, with nothing to do except to write her books and play with her friend's children, compelled to decline the proposals of her Parisian acquaintances to visit her. To. M. Guéroult,* for instance, she wrote as follows:—

"I would willingly invite you to come and see me at the Duteils' if it were not that I am obliged to live a life devoid of all irregularity in the eyes of the imbeciles in whose midst

* Famous not only as a Saint-Simonian but also as a political economist. He was, for a time, French Consul at Kazatlan (Mexico) and Jassy, and afterwards editor of *La Presse* and of *L'Opinion nationale.*

I dwell. Happily that is comparatively easy to me nowadays. But if you were to be seen coming to La Châtre from Paris, the wife of one judge, and the cousin of another, and the daughter of the sister of the servant of a third would raise a hue and cry, declaring that you were a lover, the origin and cause of my conjugal disagreement. So here I am, you see, condemned to live in this charming little country town, at which I have laughed so often, and to respect its manners and customs. You would be amused if you could see how gracefully I discharge this obligation, and with what an air of prim propriety I walk through the stony streets and the squares in which the loafers congregate."

The time passed, however, and George Sand's troubles began to approach their term, though there were to be further adjournments before the actual end. At the May hearing the technical points raised by M. Dudevant were decided in his favour; and the decision on the merits of the case was postponed until the following July.

At last! The whole neighbourhood was alert with curiosity, and public opinion was, on the whole, hostile to George Sand. She was an abandoned creature—a Republican and the friend of Republicans—an eccentric whose whole life was a revolt if not a revolution—a monster who delighted in "red ruin and the breaking up of homes." So argued the virtuous, who had never known temptation, or had only sinned in secret—whose husbands were not "*coureurs de femmes de chambre*," or who were willing to overlook such marital peccadilloes; and, with their prejudices thick upon them, they flocked to the hearing of the *cause célèbre*.

It was such a *cause célèbre* as La Châtre had never known before. Even the official reporter of the *Gazette des Tribunaux*

was moved to what nowadays we call "new journalism," and described the personal appearance of the interesting plaintiff as if he were writing for a modern halfpenny evening paper.

"Not for a long time," he wrote, "had a civil suit brought so great a crowd to the gates of the Palace of Justice. The author of 'Indiana,' 'Lélia,' and 'Jacques' took her seat behind her counsel, Maître Michel de Bourges. Parisians perhaps would not have recognised her in the costume appropriate to her sex, accustomed as they are to see the lady, in the theatres and other public places, attired in masculine garments, with her beautiful blonde hair falling in waves and curls over the collar of an overcoat of blue velvet. She was dressed in all simplicity, in a white gown, with a white hood, a collarette, and a flowered shawl. Evidently she had only come to the Court in the hope of finding some eloquently inspired arguments against ill-assorted unions."

Such is the introduction, not quite in the severe manner usual in the official reports of judicial proceedings; and then follow the speeches of counsel.

Maître Thiot-Varennes opened on behalf of the husband.

M. Dudevant, he said, had loved his wife, and had believed his affection to be returned. He and his wife had lived happily together until 1825, though the "adventurous character" of Madame Dudevant had already declared itself and indicated that his felicity would not be of long duration. Presently his client made a distressing discovery. In the course of a visit to Bordeaux, his wife had conceived a passion for another, and had yielded to it. Betrayed by the woman whom he adored, he nevertheless forgave her. Touched by his generosity and indulgence, she wrote him a letter in which she confessed everything, and covered herself with reproaches,

The reference was, of course, to George Sand's friendship for Aurélien de Sèze—a friendship of which Aurélien de Sèze had tired precisely because it showed no sign of developing into any more intimate relation. In the construction which he put upon it, the advocate was taking a liberty with the truth. But it had at least been the outcome and the expression of a divergence of tastes and interests between the husband and the wife. In insisting emphatically upon that divergence, Maître Thiot-Varennes was on firmer ground. He was addressing an audience, not of artists, but of average men and women—an audience whose views of the functions of women were those of the philosopher Pericles and the apostle Paul. Therefore he drew the contrast which he felt would appeal most forcibly to their wooden heads.

"Madame Dudevant was passionately fond of poetry, art, literary and philosophical conversation. M. Dudevant had the simple tastes of the country gentleman, more interested in looking after his estate than in poetical descriptions of the scenery. She was a dreamer, of melancholy disposition, enamoured of solitude; he had the habits and the easy-going ways of a good bourgeois."

The Tribunal was composed of "good bourgeois"; the hall was packed with them. The virtues attributed to M. Dudevant were virtues which they could understand; his weaknesses were weaknesses with which they could sympathise. It was much to his credit, they felt, that he had borne even for a moment with the deplorable eccentricities of a woman who had presumed to find the simple ways of good bourgeois ridiculous. It had been her duty to remain upon his intellectual level—to try to share his rustic tastes—

to overlook his bibulous propensities, and turn a blind eye to his amorous proceedings. Instead of which——

It seemed strange, perhaps, that he objected to be separated from a wife who had fallen so far short of the good bourgeois ideal. Certainly it could not plausibly be argued that it was for love of her that he wished to keep her by his side; and Maître Thiot-Varennes did not venture to invoke that motive. But, he reminded the Court, M. Dudevant was not only a husband but a father. Madame Dudevant was not only his wife but the mother of his children. He could not bear that she should take them from him; he could not trust her with their future. That was the note on which the speech ended; and, for his preroration the speaker turned to George Sand and addressed a passionate personal appeal to her:

"Madame, your husband was generous in 1825, and he is generous still. Now, as then, he forgets the wrongs which you have done him, and forgives you. How can M. Dudevant's children be taken away from him and entrusted to the care of a woman who has scandalised the world by her licentious life and her immoral precepts? Your books, Madam, are full of the bitterness and the regrets which devour your heart; they proclaim your profound disgust with life. The torments of your soul pursue you in the midst of your fame, and poison your triumphs. You have sought happiness everywhere, and you have found it nowhere. Well! I will show you the road to it. Return to your husband. Go back to the house in which the first years of your married life were passed so pleasantly and peaceably. Resume your position as a wife and a mother; walk once again in the path of duty and virtue; submit yourself to the laws of nature. In all other courses you will find only error

and deception ; in that course alone will you find happiness and peace."

The oration was the supreme expression of the bourgeois point of view ; for the stupidity of the bourgeois mind principally consists in applying platitudes to the exceptional cases to which they are clearly inapplicable. The task of Michel de Bourges was to show that the case was not as other cases, and to establish the claims of genius to exemption from the bourgeois rules. George Sand, for him, was "the glory of the age," seeking to "reconquer her outraged liberty, and her independence that has been trampled under foot." It was a case of "genius arresting its lofty flight in the sanctuary of justice and bending its majestic head before the sacred authority of the law."

His learned brother had read an extract from a letter in which his client was alleged to have acknowledged infidelity to her husband. He would read the whole of that letter, and the Court should judge whether it bore the meaning that had been put upon it. He read it, and it was obvious that the sense of the words had been strained. It was a composition of sublime eloquence—not a mere letter, but a piece of literature. The law reporter himself was once more shaken out of the severity of the official manner: "This piece of prose, written at the age of twenty, with a magic of style and a brilliance of colour worthy of the most beautiful pages that the author of 'Jacques' has written since, produced an impression which baffles description."

Having thus conciliated sympathies, Michel soon carried the war into the enemy's camp. "The pardon which you offer to your wife," he shouted to M. Dudevant, "is an insult. It is you who have wronged her." He reminded

him that he had been convicted of adultery under the conjugal roof—that there had been alleged against him, and remained uncontradicted, "conduct so atrocious that no human lips can describe it in all its revolting ugliness." That conduct and nothing else, was the cause of the desertion of which he complained.

"Was it not you who compelled her to quit her home by filling her with disgust for it? Not only are you responsible for the causes of her absence; you are the instigator of it, and the accomplice. Did you not leave your wife, young and inexperienced as she was, to her own devices? Did you not desert her? How can you ask the magistrates to give you back the reins which you have yourself let fall? To guide a woman aright, a certain intelligence is necessary. What intelligence do you possess, compared with hers, which you have so misunderstood? When a woman is on the point of falling, a man should be capable of raising her to her feet; when she is weak, he should be able to give her strength and to set her a good example—and what sort of an example is it that you are able to offer? And how can you claim conjugal rights over a woman whom you have left to her own devices for eight years? Was it a guilty woman who revealed all the beauties of her soul in the letter which you have yourself put in evidence? The wrongs which she did you must have been of a very trifling character, if you had to go to that letter for the proofs of your grievances. For, since the date of it, you have received your wife in your house, and have corresponded with her and have lived on terms of intimacy with the honourable friend who, in fact, treated her with the respect which she deserved. Why, you have even shaken hands with him! What then was your motive for

abandoning a wife who had given you no cause to reproach her ? "

Michel exaggerated, of course—it is the business of counsel to exaggerate ; but the conduct of M. Dudevant had given Michel's client the *beau rôle*. The truth had not sufficed for him. He had brought railing accusations of an atrocious character, supporting them with the false testimony of suborned domestics. It was, as Michel said, "with invectives in his mouth" that he came into Court to claim his wife. He "claimed her with one hand while with the other he plunged a dagger in her heart." The "triumphal arch" which he had prepared for her return was "a pillory bearing the indelible inscription of her dishonour." That indictment at any rate was true ; and the answer to the rhetorical outburst was necessarily of the nature of an anti-climax. Maître Thiot-Varennes could only say that Time was a great physician, and that, though M. Dudevant could not pretend that he was passionately attached to his wife at the moment, he would restore his affection to her as soon as she showed herself worthy of it.

He sat down, and the Advocate-General rose to sum up, coldly, judiciously, impartially. He was inclined to think that, in the first instance, the wife had been to blame, since her friendship for Aurélien de Sèze had at least amounted to "a moral adultery." On the other hand, the husband was also to blame, seeing that he had insulted his wife with "infamous and impious imputations." He concluded, therefore, in favour of the separation demanded : the father to have the custody of the son, and the daughter to remain with her mother. That was the view of the Ministry of Justice ; but the decision rested with the Court.

The Court retired to deliberate, and the judges failed to agree. The case was therefore adjourned until the following Monday, the parties being given the opportunity of coming to an amicable arrangement in the meantime. They did so, and we find the terms of the settlement reported in a letter from George Sand to her sister Caroline, now Madame Cazamajou.

"On the eve of the hearing my case was settled by a bargain concluded between M. Dudevant and myself. I am to hand him securities of the value of £1600, and he, in return, assigns the Hôtel de Narbonne to me. At the same time he gives up his claims to both Maurice and Solange, and undertakes not to persecute me any more. But I invite you to admire his paternal love and his disinterestedness. He demands not only that he shall be allowed to see the children for a few days every year, but also *that I shall pay half their travelling expenses when they visit him.* Tender and generous father! When we were settling up accounts, he did not blush to instruct his legal representative to put in a claim for fifteen pots of jam and a small stove which he valued at a franc and a half."

That is all—or at any rate all with which we need concern ourselves. Five years afterwards M. Dudevant startled George Sand by a further claim for 125 francs somehow overlooked in the taking of accounts; but after that demand had been met, hostilities ceased, and there was even a partial, though not a sincere, reconciliation. Maurice Sand occasionally carried a friendly message from one of his parents to the other; and M. Dudevant even accepted an invitation to be present at Solange's wedding in 1847. "Never," George Sand then

wrote to Mlle. de Rozières,* "was a marriage less gay, in appearance at all events, thanks to the presence of this amiable personage, whose rancours and aversions are still as keen as ever. Happily he got up early and went away at four o'clock on the morning following the ceremony."

And that is really the end. Though M. Dudevant lived until 1871, and was, at the time of his death, engaged in some litigation on money matters with his own children, he now passes definitely out of this story.

It is a story in which, as the Court held, the rights and wrongs are somewhat mixed; and it would be quite idle to attempt to judge it by modern moral standards. Even if M. Dudevant had been a better man than he was, it would have been absurd that he and George Sand should continue to live together as husband and wife. He was, in fact, a fool, a boor, a drunkard, and an avaricious spendthrift. For such men no moral claims in excess of their strict legal rights can be entertained. Their influence upon all who come in contact with them is degrading. When accident has married them to women of superior tastes, talents, and sensibilities, their place in the lives of such women is merely that of obstacles to be removed. It is only because they are fools—or because their motives are interested—that they do not readily recognise the fact.

That is really the summing up of the whole matter in the case of George Sand and M. Dudevant. One need not trouble to ask whether it would have been right or wrong for them to continue to live together. It would simply have been ridiculous. Delayed by M. Dudevant's indecent complaisance, and ultimately brought about by his equally indecent brutality, the separation was inevitable from the

* One of Chopin's favourite pupils.

first. Whether George Sand deserved her freedom—from the point of view of the Churches and the Divorce Courts—or not, it was at any rate good that she should be free. The society of M. Dudevant could have been of no use to her morally, intellectually, or artistically. From all three points of view alike, he was an obstruction—an irrelevance. Whatever the Courts might say, she was bound to live her life without regard to him.

CHAPTER XVII

Michel indoctrinates George Sand : His revolutionary harangue on the Pont des Saints-Pères : She becomes a Republican under his influence, and preaches his Gospel in her letters to her boy at school : She becomes Michel's mistress : Relations become strained and they part.

THE story of Michel's professional relations with George Sand having been told, the story of his personal relations with her remains to be examined.

In the first instance it was curiosity that sent her to see him. The great advocate was also the Great Man of the vicinity. He laid down the law, and his neighbours quoted his precepts. Moreover, he had found time to read "Lélia"—the book which George Sand considered the most faithful expression of her personality—and to be piqued and fascinated; so that the desire to meet was mutual. When they met, they pleased each other so well that, as has already been mentioned, they prolonged their conversation until the dawn, and then walked out together to take the air in the empty streets of Bourges.

Even then, however, they were far from having exhausted all that they had to say. As soon as they had parted, Michel sat down and wrote George Sand a letter. She replied with equal promptitude. That was the beginning of a considerable correspondence, which, on her part at least, was largely literary. She began at once to make "copy" out of Michel, and out of the clash of opinion that resulted from their intercourse. Her letters to him—some of them, at all events—were published in the *Revue des deux Mondes*. He is the Everard of the "Lettres d'un Voyageur." His intellectual influence on the writer can be followed from them, though the actual story of their intercourse naturally needs to be supplemented from other sources.

The central fact of the story is that, for the first time in her life, George Sand found herself consciously yielding to a Great Man's influence. Her lovers, up to that date, had been mere boys, whose relations with her had been merely passionate or sensual. Sandeau had been a student sowing his wild oats; Mérimée a precocious cynic who would not take his mistress seriously; Pagello a nonentity; Alfred de Musset, though a genius, a degenerate. There had not been a strong man, capable of dominating her, among them. Michel was a man who expected not only to dominate but to domineer.

He came into George Sand's life at the true psychological moment. The severance from Musset had been a shock, throwing the whole machinery of her emotions out of gear. She had staked her hopes upon passion, and passion had failed her. She could not—and she did not—nurse a grievance; for she had herself willed the separation. She even remonstrated sharply, as we have seen, with friends, like Boucoiran, who considered that she had a grievance and resented it, adding that she was glad to hear that Alfred had heard the news of her departure without any distressing display of grief. But her departure had none the less broken the continuity of her life. She lacked a moral pivot, an ideal. She was ready to be indoctrinated, and Michel was a doctrinaire.

The attraction must, at first, have been solely intellectual. Michel was singularly lacking in the superficial graces by which women are most apt to be fascinated. In the descriptions of his personal appearance which we owe to George Sand's pen, he figures as a grotesque, if not an actually repellant personage. His head appeared to be composed of "two skulls soldered together." He was an invalid who complained of the state of his liver and his stomach. He was short-sighted and wore "ugly spectacles"; he "looked sixty,"

though he was in fact rather less than forty. And he dressed abominably. This is the graphic picture :—

"A peasant by birth, he had retained the peasant's preference for comfortable garments of coarse material. Both at home and in the streets, he wore an enormous and shapeless great-coat and big wooden shoes. Everywhere, at all seasons of the year, he felt cold, though, in his politeness, he would never consent to wear his hat in a lady's drawing-room. He used only to ask to be allowed to tie a handkerchief over his head, and, this permission granted, he would knot three or four coloured handkerchiefs together, holding them in his hands, dropping them and picking them up again while he gesticulated, and finally using them as a skull-cap, in which he sometimes looked fantastic and sometimes picturesque."

The portrait hardly suggests either an Apollo or a Brummell, though the painter of it hastens to add, with a burst of enthusiasm, that Michel brushed his teeth and wore clean linen. This, she adds, was his "secret sybaritism" to which some democrats took exception; but she could not share their prejudice. "No sentiment," she writes, "is so beautiful that it does not lose some of its value when it issues from a filthy mouth." And Michel's sentiments were very beautiful, and he was very anxious to indoctrinate his new disciple.

His great opportunity came when he was called to Paris to act as one of the counsel for the defence in the great political trial known as the *Procès d'Avril*. The prisoners were Republicans accused of a conspiracy to overthrow the Government of Louis-Philippe. Their conspiracy was rather potential than actual, invented, according to the best authorities, by the police for the purpose of imprisoning or banishing as many Republicans as possible, and so securing the

Orleanist dynasty. They were defiant, however, and resolved that their defence should be a demonstration—a public proclamation of hostility to the King in his own Courts of Law. To that end, they summoned the leading Republican advocates from all quarters of France; and Michel of Bourges was one of the elect.

As it happened, he did not secure their acquittal, but was himself sentenced to a month's imprisonment for contempt of court; but that is a side issue, irrelevant to the present story. What concerns us is that George Sand followed him to Paris, and that their friendship ripened in the midst of the political agitation. She resumed her masculine dress in order to obtain access to the Court and hear the speeches; and every evening she received in her apartment a select company of friends—mostly Saint-Simonians—to whom Michel preached the Republican Gospel, or else dined with Michel at a restaurant, and, after dinner, rowed with him on the Seine, or walked with him on the boulevards. It was, according to the Autobiography, in the course of one of these walks that Michel first fully expounded the doctrines of which, in previous conversations, he had only spoken vaguely.

There was a ball at the Tuileries that night. George Sand, and Planet, and Michel stood on the Saints-Pères bridge, watching the reflection of the Palace lights in the Seine, and listening to the distant strains of the music, wafted to them by the perfumed air of the Spring. They were all enjoying the calm beauty of the scene when suddenly she heard Michel's uplifted voice denouncing civilisation. "Civilisation indeed! I tell you that before your accursed Society can renew its youth, this river must run red with blood, and this accursed Palace be reduced to ashes, and this

vast city which you behold be made a field on which the poor man's family may guide their plough and build their cottage."

And so forth, with violent gestures. "It was," says George Sand, "an awful and magnificent declamation against the wickedness of Courts, the corruption of great cities, the enervating influence of art, luxury, and industrialism. It was a call for the dagger and the torch, the pronouncement of a curse upon the impure Jerusalem, and an apocalyptic prophecy. And then, after these dark images, he spoke of the world of the future as he dreamed that it might be, of the ideal rural life, of the manners of the Golden Age, and of the earthly Paradise that the magic wand of some fairy might cause to flourish on the old world's smoking ruins."

And so forth until the clock struck two. The interruption gave George Sand a chance to interpose, and say a good word for Art; but the orator would not listen. "He was beside himself," we read. "He descended the step of the quay as he declaimed; he broke his walking-stick against the walls of the old Louvre; he bellowed such seditious sentiments that I cannot think how it was that the police did not come up and arrest him. No other man in the world could have behaved so eccentrically without appearing to be mad, and without making himself ridiculous."

And so forth, until his companions were frightened and fled, and Michel discovered that he had been left declaiming in solitude to the night air. Then he ran after them, and overtook them, and quarrelled with them, and implored them to listen to him for several hours longer, threatening that he would never speak to them again if they refused. "One would have said," writes George Sand, "that it was

a lover's quarrel rather than an argument on the doctrine of Babeuf."

They were not lovers yet, however. They were only teacher and disciple; the stormy scene was only an incident in indoctrination. Probably there were other scenes, hardly less stormy, before the indoctrination was completed. George Sand, though she desired to be indoctrinated, had her own point of view which she would not abandon without a struggle. Michel's denunciation of the Arts was the great stumbling-block to her. She could not see how it would profit humanity that Taglioni should be required to wear long skirts, or that the delicate hands of Liszt should be employed to turn a mangle; nor would she believe that Michel himself was as indifferent to the Arts as he professed to be. Had he not, she asked, once made a disturbance at the theatre to prevent Othello from killing Desdemona? So she resisted, only yielding the ground step by step. The course of the resistance may be traced in the eloquent pages of the "Lettres à Everard."

But Michel was a stern, domineering schoolmaster who insisted; and he treated George Sand as a child, even going so far, on one occasion, as to lock her up in her room and take away the key, in order that she might be compelled, during his absence, to reflect in solitude upon his admonitions. She nearly revolted against his rough treatment, and defied him. Just as she had run away from him when he perorated on the Pont des Saints-Pères, so now she threatened to leave him in Paris and join Liszt and Madame d'Agoult at Geneva. One of the Letters unfolds that programme; and George Sand jestingly challenges Michel to proclaim the Republic during her absence, confiscate her property, drink her wine, smoke her tobacco, turn out his horses to graze in

her garden, and make cartridges of the books in her library: "All that I ask for on my return is a pipe, a pen, and some ink. Granted these things, I will earn my living gaily, and spend the remainder of my life in writing in praise of your performance."

She did not go, however. It is impossible to be sure that she even meant to go. She remained to be beaten in argument, to submit, and, in a word, to be indoctrinated. The influence of Michel—grotesque philosopher though he appeared to be—was a real thing, and was to outlast alike her friendship for him and the sincerity of his convictions. She had reached a turning-point of her life. He had helped her round the corner, and set her on the new road in which she was to walk for many years to come.

For her, as for so many others, the storm and stress of the Romantic period were over. She had not, indeed, outlived her passions—far from that; but their gratification was no longer to be her guiding star. She was no longer to call upon God to sanctify illicit love as the fulfilment of the Divine will revealed to the human heart. Illicit love was henceforward to be the by-play of life and not its central drama. She had accepted a new philosophy with a new *summum bonum*; she was a Republican, an altruist, a Humanitarian.

The change of tone can easily be traced in the novels, for the George Sand of "Consuelo" and "Mauprat" is widely different from the George Sand of "Lélia." It is even more obviously visible in the Correspondence; for George Sand, like most zealous disciples, did not wait to finish learning before she began to teach. The precepts on which she meditated when Michel locked her up in her room she handed on, as soon as she was released, to Maurice at the

lycée. Her letters to the child suddenly became so many propagandist pamphlets.

She warned the boy against "excessive self-love"—the curse of the age, and the source of vanity and the greed for gold. She drew his attention to the war eternally raging between "the sentiments of justice and those of cupidity," though admitting that "those who defend the rights of property with guns and bayonets are more often fools than knaves." She asked him if he thought it right that the fruits of the earth and the means of industry should be unequally divided—that some men should be able to eat more than was good for them, while others starved. She begged him to pay no attention to the erroneous lessons which his professors drew from history. She promised to tell him in other letters by what means the wrongs of the downtrodden might be redressed and the whole social system reorganised; and she particularly urged him on no account to discuss these matters with his father, but to take advice from her alone.

Nor was that all. Maurice was in the same class at the lycée as the little Duc de Montpensier, who on his birthday invited all his classmates to a party at the Palace. It was a good opportunity for George Sand to put a point upon her moral. Of course Maurice might go—he was too young for the matter to be of any consequence. The favours shown him by Montpensier pledged him to nothing. Still favours they were, and if it so happened that Maurice were asked his opinion on any political question, he must reply that he was a Republican by birth and disposition. Above all, he must not let the grandeur of royalty dazzle him.

"Never let yourself be persuaded that a prince is naturally better or more worth listening to than any other man. On

the contrary, princes are our natural enemies; and however good a man a king's son may be, it is his destiny to become a tyrant, while it is our destiny to be degraded, downtrodden, or persecuted by him."

It was the oration of the Pont des Saints-Pères rewritten in simple language for children. One can imagine the affectionate amazement of the particular child to whom it was addressed. But Michel had spoken; and, in season or out of season, the Gospel according to Michel must be preached.

In due course, as all the world knows, the disciple became the teacher's mistress; and one wonders why. One is tempted to say that it was superfluous; one is almost tempted to say that it was absurd.

Michel, on his part, would seem to have been much more anxious to indoctrinate than to embrace. George Sand's description of him, cited in some preceding paragraphs—the reference to his bald cranium, his quaint skull-cap, his stooping gait, his ill-cut clothes, his clattering wooden shoes—indicates a man far better fitted for the rôle of teacher than for that of lover. Yet he became a lover, and there was even some talk of marriage, though the path to that consummation was barred by the fact that there was already a Madame Michel as well as a M. Dudevant. Presumably his dictatorial arrogance—the distinguishing note of his character, as George Sand never tires of telling us—required the supreme concession. The Great Man, he may have felt, ought not to be refused privileges which so many lesser men had been accorded. So far as he is concerned, that is the most plausible explanation; while, if we look at the matter from George Sand's point of view, there seems to be little to be said except that

there are certain habits with which women as well as men find it very hard to break.

Probably, again, the very arrogance which made Michel a success as a teacher made him a failure as a lover. One divines as much from a letter which George Sand presently wrote to Madame d'Agoult, complaining of Great Men. She had "had enough" of them, she said; they were "a burden on her back." She bore the burden for a while, but then her personality reasserted itself.

The story cannot be told in any detail for lack of documents. The volumes of the Correspondence ignore the episode altogether. We have only a certain fragment of a diary—another "Journal Intime"—written by George Sand, and bearing the quaint title, "Entretiens journaliers avec le très docte et très habile docteur Piffoel, professeur de Botanique et de Psychologie," and a collection of letters, published in the *Revue Illustrée* in 1890–1891, and clearly demonstrated, by internal evidence, to be some of George Sand's letters to Michel. We have to make what we can of these, and there is not much to be made of them, seeing that they all relate to a time when the *liaison* was already near its end.

They are very different from the letters written towards the close of the *liaison* with Musset. George Sand's letters to the poet were written with her heart's blood; those to the philosopher with ink. They are literary: when they were first printed, and their authorship was as yet unsuspected, they were accepted as a clever imitation of the passionate style of 1830. But the facts transpire in them, and they allow the cause, though not the occasion, of the rupture to be divined.

"Alas! My God! It is a yoke of iron that I have endured. When it was imposed upon me in the name of

love, and with the persuasiveness of affection, I submitted blindly to a lover's hand. But when my lover tired of persuading and wished to command—when he claimed my submission no longer in the name of love and friendship, but in virtue of some right or power over me—then I recovered the strength which my friends do not know me to possess, which is known only to myself. For I alone know how deeply I love, how bitterly I regret, how profoundly I suffer.

"Everard, you are a great master. I have known you sublime in your tenderness, paternal, persuasive, inspiring fanatical devotion. Why, why, old veteran, has your heart grown hard? Why have you tried to make slaves of your children? Why have you preferred the name of master to the gentler name of father? And now, see, you stand alone."

There is more in the same strain, but the single extract may, for the moment, suffice; the whole of the emotional history of the lovers can be inferred from it. Michel was a tyrant by nature, and, one conjectures, had become a lover only in order to assert a tyrant's right; and one of the rights which tyrants claim is to neglect their mistresses, turning brusquely from their embraces to what they regard as more serious occupations.

It may be that Michel drew back from a *liaison* which threatened to compromise his professional position. Advocates have to be more careful than poets; and George Sand was not the woman to let herself be loved in secret. She preferred to *afficher* herself, and to discuss her love affairs with Sainte-Beuve, and Boucoiran, and other friends; and one can understand that this did not suit Michel—a married man with a provincial bourgeois *clientèle*. Be that as it may, he at any rate neglected her. For weeks he neither came to see her nor

wrote; his letters, when he did write, became "impossible." George Sand not only wrote to him to protest and complain; she also wrote to her friends to ask if they, by chance, knew of any reason which could account for Michel's conduct.

They would not help her; and Michel, on his part, would not come and ask to be forgiven. So the hour of the inevitable rupture approached; and it came—in what precise circumstances is not known—towards the end of the summer of 1837.

Michel thereafter held aloof from politics, and amassed a fortune in the exercise of his calling. There were not wanting those who accused him of avarice—the favourite vice of men of his peasant origin in France. When the Revolution of 1848 brought him back to political life, the men who had once acclaimed him as their leader had almost forgotten him; and he made himself no second reputation comparable with the first. But George Sand continued to preach his Gospel, cherishing the ideas with which he had indoctrinated her, under the influence of other men, long after he had passed out of her life for ever.

CHAPTER XVIII

Maurice Sand at the Tuileries : George Sand's relations with Lamennais : The Saint-Simonians : Their proposal that George Sand should become their high-priestess : Their gifts to her : Her reasons for rejecting their overtures.

GEORGE SAND'S attempts to indoctrinate her schoolboy son with the principles of her lover's philosophy cannot be said to have been crowned with complete success. The letter in which she exhorted the child to remember that he was a Republican, even at the Tuileries, and to behave himself there with the stern dignity of an ancient Roman, elicited the following reply :—

"MY DEAR MAMA,—Montpensier invited me to his party in spite of my political opinions. I enjoyed myself very much. Montpensier made us all spit out of the window on the heads of the National Guards."

That, however, is by the way ; and it must be noted that Michel's influence over George Sand, great though it was, was never quite exclusive. She had many other friends at the same period, and saw a good deal of them. Among her intimates were ex-Abbé Lamennais, and Liszt, who was also to be an Abbé presently, but had just then distinguished himself by running away with the Comtesse d'Agoult, and the leading members of the Saint-Simonian group, who tried hard to persuade her to join them.

About Lamennais there is not a great deal to be said, except that there is probably no truth in the story that the austere author of the "Paroles d'un Croyant" was seen on the terrace at Nohant smoking a hookah with his hostess, attired in embroidered slippers and a flowered Oriental dressing-gown. The austerity of Lamennais was real enough ;

and the amorous religiosity of the Romantic School played no part in his spiritual growth. For him, George Sand was only a repentant Magdalen whose fluent pen, if properly directed, might be a power for good; and she was so far in earnest that she declined an invitation to contribute, at good prices, to the *Journal des Dèbats*, in order to have time to contribute gratuitously to Lamennais's propagandist organ, *Le Monde*.

The trouble was that, though they were both progressives, they did not progress at the same pace. "He pushed me along in front," says George Sand in her Autobiography, "and then complained that I walked too fast. I, on my part, often thought that he walked too slowly for my taste." She protested that Lamennais did not understand "how extensive was the mandate that God had given him"; she also protested that he did not understand life as well as she understood it. "You have lived among angels," she wrote to him. "I have lived with men and women. I know all about suffering, and I know all about sin." And then there arose difficulties between them on the subject of women's rights. George Sand thought that those rights should be extended; Lamennais that they should be limited. He was steadily getting rid of his religious beliefs; but he still clung to the Pauline precept that women should not be suffered to preach. So he and George Sand, after a brief alliance, drifted apart—separated not by any jealous contemporary influence, but by the shadow of the Apostle of the Gentiles.

The Saint-Simonian doctrine had many points of similarity with that of Lamennais, but on this question of the position of women it differed from it widely. Those doctrines, however, were not always the same, but underwent remarkable developments which Saint-Simon himself never contemplated;

so that a preliminary word on the origin and history of Saint-Simonism seems necessary.

When Saint-Simon died in 1825, his disciples who followed him to the grave founded a newspaper for the purpose of continuing his teachings. The staff of the newspaper became the nucleus of a group of thinkers concerned, like Michel de Bourges, with the regeneration of a corrupt society. In a work which makes no pretence to be an economic treatise, they may be described, with rough approximation to accuracy, as Socialists.

If they were Socialists, however, they were also something more than Socialists. Their inspiration was, or speedily became, romantic as well as economic, and religious as well as romantic. They were children—if only illegitimate children—of the Romantic Movement; and the notes of that movement, as has already been shown in the course of this work, were a revolt against the conventions of conduct as well as of literature, and a transference of the sentiments of religious exaltation to the sphere of illicit love. These tendencies soon began to declare themselves among the Saint-Simonians. They felt that society was not to be regenerated by pamphlets and newspaper articles alone: that the world needed not only a doctrine but a religion—and not only a religion but a Church. They set themselves, much as Comte did at a later date, to supply that need, and found that Church, with headquarters in Paris, and branches in the principal provincial towns.

Brains, enthusiasm, and money are the chief requisites for such an undertaking; and these things they possessed, in sufficiency if not in superabundance. There were among them stockbrokers, wine merchants, professors, and officers in the "scientific branches" of the army. We have a testimony

to their earnestness in the statement of a brother of the great churchman Lacordaire that the zeal of their missionaries reminded him of Saint Bernard preaching the Crusade. We have a still more eloquent testimony to it in the subscription list. A large landed proprietor from Angers gave the Church the whole of his estates. The director of the Creusot arsenal subscribed nearly the whole of his salary. The mother of one of the earliest converts came forward with a donation of £8000; there were two donations of £6000 and one of £4000. Altogether, a sum of about £35,000 was collected.

Funds thus provided, questions arose as to the teaching and ritual of the Church; and these were elaborated by degrees after noisy debates, and amid clamorous differences of opinion.

The presiding genius of the new revelation was the celebrated Père Enfantin, who had been educated at the Ecole Polytechnique, and had subsequently amassed a modest competency in Germany and Russia as a dealer in wines and spirits; and he set to work at once to organise a priesthood. "L'individu social," Saint-Simon had written, "c'est l'homme et la femme." It followed that the sacred office could not be filled by a man alone, nor by a woman alone, but must be held by a man and a woman jointly—officially styled "a couple." But not a married couple. Enfantin, though no longer a Catholic, was still dominated by Catholic ideas. The priest and priestess must live chastely, "separated by a cloud of incense."

Enfantin, however, was a logical man, not ashamed of changing his mind; and chastity had only a brief importance in the Saint-Simonian system. The essence of the system was that the superior should exercise influence over the inferior. All means to that end were good; the flesh shared

the sanctity of the spirit; the embrace was a legitimate means of moral propagandism. It must be permissible, therefore, for the priests and priestesses not only to embrace each other, but also to embrace the members of their flocks. Moreover, the family was fatal to collectivism, and collectivism was more important than the family. Free love must therefore take the place of marriage, and children must not be allowed to know their fathers. That was the revised creed, and, whatever other people might do, Enfantin lived up to it, refusing, in the name of religion, to marry the young woman whom he had seduced under promise of marriage, and writing, in a letter to his mother, that if he were married he could conceive of circumstances in which he would feel it his duty to yield his wife to some other member of the brotherhood—"that she might hold him in her caressing arms at the moment when a profound grief required some such powerful diversion."

The difficulty was to find a woman who, when these doctrines had been widely promulgated, was both worthy and willing to take the office of high-priestess of this very remarkable sect. At the great ceremonies of the sect a chair used to be left vacant for her. It was hoped and expected that she would enter uninvited and announce herself, and that all the worshippers would recognise her as the high-priestess for whom they were waiting. At one of the services, the expectation seemed about to be fulfilled. A beautiful young woman entered the hall, attired in blue Greek draperies, with white roses in her hair. She had that day come of age, she said, and had dedicated herself to the Saint-Simonian Apostolate; she proposed to travel in Egypt with Père Enfantin. But even as she spoke, there was a noise without—the high falsetto of an indignant female voice; and the door opened,

and an indignant female form appeared, and it was: "My daughter! What is my daughter doing here? My daughter must come home with me at once." The postulant was led away in hysterics, and the office remained vacant.

But why should not George Sand fill it? That was the question that the Saint-Simonians began to ask themselves.

She seemed, for clear reasons, more fit to be a priestess of that order than of any other. They regarded her as the typical New Woman—the pioneer who had shown by the example of her life the path to the emancipation of her sex; and they knew that she had "substituted for marriage" what the articles of their faith styled "successive or rather progressive unions." Moreover, she had shown her intelligent interest in their proceedings. Accompanied by Alfred de Musset, she had visited the monastery which they set up at Ménilmontant, and had admired them—or so they may have supposed—in their monastic garb, which consisted of sky-blue coats, white trousers, and white waistcoats, with the wearers' names embroidered on them in red letters; and she had even written to them in encouraging terms.

"Faithful to the old affections of my childhood," she declared, "and to old social hatreds, I cannot separate the idea of Republic from that of Regeneration. For the salvation of the world it seems to me to be necessary that we should destroy and that you should reconstruct. While the energetic arms of the Republicans make the *town*, the sacred sermons of the Saint-Simonians will make the *city*. We are the soldiers; you are the priests."

And she added, with a fine lyrical outpouring:—

"In my poet's head I dream of Homeric combats which

I watch, with a throbbing heart, from the mountain top, or in the midst of which I plunge, drunk with enthusiasm and a holy vengeance. I dream also of a new day after the storm is over,—of a splendid sunrise, of altars decked with flowers, of legislators crowned with olives, of the rehabilitation of human dignity: man freed from the tyranny of man, and woman from the tyranny of woman, and a tutelage of love exercised by the man over the woman, and the priest over the man. . . . Let me, therefore, groan and pray over this Jerusalem which has lost its gods and has not yet saluted its Messiah. My vocation is to hate evil, to love good, and to fall on my knees before beauty."

Nothing was more natural than that the high-priesthood should be offered to the hymnodist who had shown that she possessed all the hierophantic qualities; and overtures were made. The Saint-Simonians came to George Sand, with gifts in their hands, on New Year's Day. Her small apartment was encumbered with their offerings, which numbered sixty-three in all. Garlands and bouquets descended upon her in showers. She was presented with several pictures, a writing-desk, a yard-measure, a cup and saucer, a thermometer, and a pack of playing-cards. Her dressing-table was loaded with perfumery; jewellery was represented by rings, brooches, earrings, and bracelets; the articles of wearing apparel offered included hats and boots, aprons and slippers, and even the most intimate of under-garments.

The temptation must have been strong; but we are left to conjecture the reasons why she did not yield to it. Probably there were more reasons than one, and the psychological moment had been allowed to pass. The litigation with M. Dudevant may have been one obstacle; for it would

hardly have improved the prospects of the plaintiff in a demand for a judicial separation to come into Court in the character of high-priestess of the Saint-Simonian Order. The objections of Michel may well have been another; for he was probably a jealous, though not an ardent lover. The desire expressed in one of the letters, that Maurice and Solange might have "a respectable mother" may also have counted for something; and so too may the counsels of the austere ex-Abbé Lamennais, and the fear of the laughter of the frivolous Madame d'Agoult.

The fact remains, at any rate, that, as the Saint-Simonians approached George Sand, her attitude towards them became more critical. Coming under other influences, she found fault with their methods. She was interested to learn that two hundred copies of her portrait had been distributed among the "proletariat" members of the brotherhood, and she asked that twenty copies of that portrait might be sent to her for her own use. But she was disappointed to hear that the Saint-Simonians were sending representatives to the East to look for a new revelation. The essence of Saint-Simonism, as she understood it, was the abolition of private property. The rest was vanity and vexation of spirit: "Jesuitical metaphysics, and a pretended system of morality in which no one really believes."

That was the answer, delivered to Adolphe Guéroult; and it was final. George Sand and the Saint-Simonians went their separate ways; and Liszt and Madame d'Agoult came to pay a visit to Nohant.

CHAPTER XIX

George Sand and Liszt : Liszt's elopement with Madame d'Agoult : Friendship of George Sand for Madame d'Agoult : She visits Madame d'Agoult and Liszt at Geneva : They visit her at Nohant : Relations begin to be strained : Practical jokes at Nohant : Eugène Pelletan's experiences as tutor to George Sand's children.

LISZT'S relations with George Sand were the subject of malicious gossip. Heine first declared that he was her lover, and afterwards withdrew the charge in strangely offensive language, saying that she had "never felt the least attraction towards the swaggering little insect." Apparently, however, the charge and the retractation were equally untrue. There was a moment, indeed, when Alfred de Musset was jealous of Liszt; but Musset was just then capable of being jealous of anybody, on the strength of any idle rumour that he heard. All our evidence goes to show that the terms on which they lived were only those of Bohemian *camaraderie*.

The great pianist was at that time the spoiled darling of Parisian salons, living not only "in the movement," but in all the movements, Romantic, Saint-Simonian, and fashionable. Musical critics "ran" him against Thalberg; and before his star the star of Thalberg paled. Women pursued him, as women always do pursue the fashionable pianist of the hour, holding, as women generally do hold in such a case, that love may level ranks, on the one condition that it is illicit. Aristocratic ladies refused him the hands of their daughters, but offered him their own hearts freely; and one aristocratic lady—Marie, Comtesse d'Agoult, whom we have already met as one of George Sand's correspondents—did not even wait to be asked before leaving her husband for his sake.

Madame d'Agoult, *née* de Flavigny, was thirty, and one of the most beautiful women of her day—blue-eyed and golden-haired. Her marriage had been *de convenance*; her husband—a typical *grand seigneur* of the *ancien régime*—was twenty years older than herself; she was bored; she was clever; she was romantic. Above all, perhaps, romance attracted her when there was *réclame* attaching to it. Her chief ambition would seem to have been that the eyes of the world should be fixed upon her as the Beatrice of an artist of genius. For such notoriety she would account no sacrifice too great; and Liszt was the man whom destiny seemed to have marked out to be her Dante. She had had many flirtations; but that was nothing. What she sought was at once a *grande passion* and a *coup d'éclat*.

Liszt, being partly under religious influences, hesitated. He was willing to love, but shrank from the irreparable step of an elopement; and he pleaded, almost as a girl pleads not to be compelled to marry a man whom she does not love He pleaded personally, and also through emissaries. He called upon the mother of his mistress, Madame de Flavigny, and laid the case before her, and also before the family solicitor. He sent Abbé Duguerray—the same Abbé Duguerray whom the Communists were at a later day to shoot—to make representations on his behalf. Lamennais also acted for him, and besought Madame d'Agoult, with tears in his eyes, not to impose this severe strain upon their common friend's devotion.

But all in vain. Madame d'Agoult had made up her mind, and nothing but the *coup de théâtre* would satisfy her. If Liszt would not compromise her, she would find a way of compromising him. So she told him that she was going to Basle with her mother, and begged him to join them there.

There could be no harm in that, of course—especially if they stayed at different hotels; and Liszt did not see his way to refuse. The next thing that happened was that Madame d'Agoult left her mother, and presented herself, with all her luggage, in Liszt's apartments. He could resist no longer, but submitted to his mistress's more imperious will.

Thoughts of divorce and remarriage crossed his mind. "If only we were Protestants!" he sighed; but Madame d'Agoult had no views of that sort. *Noblesse oblige!* She was an aristocrat to the finger-tips, and he was only a wandering musician. "The Comtesse d'Agoult," she told him, "could, in no circumstances, become Madame Liszt"; * and he, having his own notions of what honour compelled, did not press the matter, but accepted the situation into which she had forced him, and took all the blame for it. Paris denounced him, not so much for immorality as for presumption. The charge was that he had "abducted" a great nobleman's wife, whereas the truth was that she had abducted him. "Very well, I will bear it," he said, when the allegation was reported to him; and he and Madame d'Agoult settled at Geneva.

A woman, however, needs a woman's sympathy when she tosses her cap over the windmills and challenges social outlawry. It is easier, indeed, in such a case, for a woman to be satisfied with the society of men than it would be for a man to be satisfied with the society of women; but she needs at least one friend of her own sex to stand by her and accord her moral support in her theatrical defiance of accepted codes; and George Sand, in this case, seemed marked out for the

* Just as Dorothea von Lieven could not think of becoming Madame Guizot in spite of her passionate attachment to the statesman.

rôle of sympathetic confidante. She had set the example which Madame d'Agoult had followed; the elopement with Liszt was very much on the lines of the earlier elopement with Musset; and the aristocrat had already descended from her social heights to form a romantic friendship with the romantic novelist.

It was the *liaison*, indeed, which had brought the friendship about. Liszt had taken George Sand into his confidence; and the confidence had been received with no censorious comments, but with an outburst of romantic enthusiasm. Liszt was an artist; artists, according to the Saint-Simonians, —and George Sand was nearly a Saint-Simonian,—were the true priests of humanity. George Sand, therefore, felt that she must see, and know, and love the aristocrat who was prepared to make such "noble" sacrifices for an artist's sake. She took her pen, and sat down at once, and wrote a letter to her "beautiful countess with the golden hair."

"I do not know you personally, but I have heard Franz speak of you, and I have seen you; and I think I can, on the strength of that, tell you that I love you, and that you are the only beautiful, estimable, and truly *noble* person whom I have seen conspicuous in the patrician sphere. Your power must indeed be great to have made me forget that you are a countess.

"At present, however, you are for me the true type of the princess of fairy tale—an artist of noble manners and passionate heart, in speech and style resembling the kings' daughters of poetic times. That is how I see you, and I wish to love you as you are and for what you are."

Madame d'Agoult did not reply. No doubt she felt that it was her privilege as an aristocrat to make the first advances.

She accepted, however, Liszt's invitation to meet George Sand at dinner at his mother's house; and then she accepted a further invitation to visit George Sand herself in her Bohemian apartment. We have a charming picture of that visit in one of the "Lettres d'un Voyageur" addressed to Liszt.

The garret was hung with blue curtains; a few engravings after Raphael were on the wall; there were plenty of books, and flowers—and pipes; the guests for whom there were no seats could stretch themselves on rugs upon the floor. Liszt sat at the piano, and George Sand sat on top of it. Emmanuel Arago had lifted her on to that graceful perch, laughing at her because she was so small, proposing for the future to carry her about with him in a paper bag. Michel de Bourges, listening to the music, was wrapt in contemplation and dissolved in tears. "Young man, you are great!" he sobbed, in the intervals between the pieces. Liszt's pupil Puzzi, who afterwards became a Carmelite monk, lay at the feet of ex-Abbé Lamennais—"the Saint of Brittany"—who discoursed to him of spiritual things; and in the midst of this gathering," the Peri in the blue dress descended, like the fairies who appear to the poor artists in Hoffmann's joyous tales."

The romantic friendship dated from that day. "The first time I saw you," George Sand afterwards wrote, "I thought you pretty, but you were cold. The second time I told you that I detested the aristocracy, not knowing that you belonged to it. Instead of boxing my ears as I deserved, you talked to me about your soul, as if I had known you for ten years."

That was the beginning of a long correspondence; and there was no fear that the flight to Geneva would put an end to the relations thus inaugurated. On the contrary, it was understood that George Sand would be the guest of the fugitives as soon as she could get away. Apparently, as we

have seen, she thought of taking refuge with them when Michel, that truculent propagandist, locked her up in her room to meditate upon his doctrines. The repeated adjournments, however, of her suit against M. Dudevant claimed her presence in France, and it was not until towards the end of the summer of 1836 that she was able to start for Switzerland.

Her spirits were high, in spite of the fact that her relations with Michel were already beginning to be strained. Probably she felt a sense of relief in the temporary escape from his jurisdiction. At all events, her record of the excursion reads like the chronicle of a schoolgirl's holiday. She and her friends and Puzzi and Major Pictet made a trip to Chamonix, and behaved with an abandon which caused them to be mistaken for strolling players. They gave each other queer nicknames. Madame d'Agoult's party were "the Fellows": George Sand and her maid—who thought Martigny was Martinique, and wept to find herself so far away from home—and Maurice and Solange were the *Famille Piffoels*, a sobriquet which the length of their noses suggested. Like many other travellers of less renown, they made jocular entries in the visitors' book. Liszt described himself as a "musician philosopher," born on Parnassus, and journeying from Doubt to Truth. The particulars which George Sand furnished were as follows:—

Nom des voyageurs	Famille Piffoels.
Domicile	La Nature.
D'où ils viennent	De Dieu.
Où ils vont	Au Ciel.
Lieu de naissance	Europe.
Qualités	Flâneurs.
Date de leurs titres	Toujours.
Délivrés par qui	Par l'opinion publique.

In October the friends parted, and were better friends than ever. There exists a document, drafted by Madame d'Agoult in playful imitation of a legal contract, whereby they professed to conclude an "offensive and defensive alliance." The most interesting clause in the document is the following :—

"It is agreed between the parties that public morality is a word that rings hollow, being composed of ninety-nine million private immoralities fused together to make a public morality on the principle that two blacks make a white. And it is further agreed between the parties that they will protest against the said public morality in thought, word, and action."

Such was the bond of union between the travellers who told the world that they came from God and were on their way to heaven. "Charming and angelic in its goodness" George Sand's description of the letter containing the text of the treaty; and presently measures were taken to give effect to it. The allies took apartments in the same house—the Hôtel de France in the Rue Neuve-Lafitte—and jointly opened a salon to defy the world.

The aristocracy naturally did not accept—and presumably did not receive—invitations. Women, too, were almost as scarce as they were, at a later date, in the salon of Lady Blessington; Madame Marliani, wife of the Spanish Consul, being the only habituée of her sex. But Liszt filled the house with artists, and George Sand introduced her literary friends. Lamennais came, not having been informed, perhaps, that his hostesses had declared public morality to be the Enemy; so did Pierre Leroux, whom we shall meet again in a more

intimate connection with George Sand; so did Sainte-Beuve, of whom it is recorded that, if not on that occasion, then on some other, he "taught George Sand to pray." Other guests were Heine, unaccompanied, one conjectures, by Mathilde; Ballanche, who loved Madame Récamier; Eugène Sue, who had not yet achieved fame with "Les Mystères de Paris"; Mickiewics, the Polish poet; Charles Didier* of Geneva, Victor Schoelcher, Adolphe Nourrit,† and the inevitable Michel. Truly a notable salon, well worthy to have its history written, though it was only in existence for two months and a half!

At the end of that time George Sand withdrew to Nohant, either because she was tiring of interminable conversation, or because influenza was raging in Paris. But the friendship was still unimpaired, and it was arranged that her friend should follow her, and make a long stay in her house. An attack of influenza detained Madame d'Agoult for a few days, but she came as soon as she was convalescent; and the visit lasted, with an interruption in the spring, from February until July. Three weeks after her arrival, we find her writing to her friend Louis de Ronchaud: "I am very happy here. My affection for George is increasing. The country suits her better than Paris, and it suits me better too." And a letter from Liszt to the same correspondent tells us how the time was passed, in riding, and reading, and walking, and music, and philosophical discussion.

It was during this period, however, that the romantic friendship began to cool; and the reasons why it did so—

* Poet, novelist, and traveller, best known for his "Rome souterraine."

† The opera singer. He lost his voice and committed suicide by throwing himself from a window at Naples.

and was bound to do so—are not difficult to conjecture. The friends necessarily saw too much of each other. In spite of the fact that they had made common cause against "public morality," their tastes and dispositions differed, and their characters clashed; while, in so far as they were two of a trade, there was an obvious opening for jealousy. Madame d'Agoult had literary aspirations—literature has something more than a nodding acquaintance with her under the pseudonym of "Daniel Stern"—and the laurels of George Sand did not suffer her to sleep. She was an amateur, envious of the greater renown of the professional, and probably unable to see that the professional was any cleverer than herself.

On the other hand, Madame d'Agoult was *grande dame*, and though George Sand was capable of affecting the style of *grande dame* when she remembered her grandmother's lessons in deportment, she generally forgot those lessons, and behaved quite otherwise. She was Bohemian, *bon garçon*, and she conducted her house after the approved style of Liberty Hall—perhaps one may even say, after the fashion of the country-houses of that smart set denounced by Father Vaughan and other popular preachers of our own time. Liszt's account of the life there is only a partial picture which her own letters to various friends supplement with surprising particulars.

Practical jokes, we gather, were the order of the day. Apple-pie beds were made; April fool tricks were played—not all of them in the best of taste. A distinguished stranger, for example, called, asking to be allowed to introduce himself and pay his homage; and it was arranged that he should be received by the maid, who pretended to be the mistress, while George Sand hid herself behind a curtain, and watched her admirer bowing low before the servant and complimenting

her upon her literary genius. Eugène Pelletan—the father of M. Camille Pelletan, recently French Naval Minister—who was then living at Nohant as Maurice Sand's tutor, was practically driven out of the house by the annoyances which he suffered. One of the party pretended to be drunk, and wept upon his breast at the dinner-table. Another presented him with a comestible which he tried to eat, and which he then discovered to be something so nauseating that George Sand would not even name it in Latin when she told the story. She complains, again and again, that the tutor will not take these jokes in good part, but "looks stupid, becomes melancholy, thinks of eternity and infinity and his misunderstood genius, and retires to bed."

There is no evidence, indeed, that any of these jokes were played at Madame d'Agoult's expense. If, for instance, the water which was poured out of the window on to Pelletan's head, had fallen on one of her expensive dresses, we may be tolerably sure that she would have packed and departed without loss of time. But the atmosphere in which such things happened cannot have been congenial to her. The whole tone of the house must have jarred upon her equally as *grande dame* and as a sentimental student of the reflections and philosophisings of Sénancour.* She was dignified even when she was frivolous, and she discovered that her friend was vulgar even when she was a love-sick Socialist. So the seeds of estrangement were sown.

There was no open quarrel. Correspondence, ostensibly amicable, still continued after Madame d'Agoult and Liszt had left Nohant for the Italian Lakes. But the correspondents began to neglect each other, and to make the neglect a matter for mutual reproaches; and presently the correspondence began

* The author of "Obermann."

to contain certain personal references of which alienation was the natural sequel. We find the name of Mallefille in the letters, and, a little later, we find the name of Chopin ; but these names belong to other sections of the story, so that the relation of the actual rupture must be postponed.

CHAPTER XX

Death of George Sand's mother : Solange kidnapped by M. Dudevant : Pursuit and recapture : Letters to Girerd on the waning of the love of Michel : George Sand consoles herself for the loss of Michel's love by becoming the mistress of Félicien Mallefille : She and Madame d'Agoult quarrel about Mallefille : Mallefile supplanted by Pierre Leroux.

THE multifarious character of George Sand's activities has compelled departure from the chronological order of relation ; and even now it is still necessary to turn back, and recapitulate, and supplement.

Never, perhaps, did a woman of letters live a more crowded life than she did in the eighteen months or so which terminated at the end of the summer of 1837. One might have thought that her litigation and her love affairs would have sufficed to fill her time ; but she found leisure for several other interests and occupations. She toyed, as has been told, with Saint-Simonism ; she adopted a new social creed under the influence of Michel, and modified it under the influence of Lamennais ; she laughed with Liszt and Madame d'Agoult, and joined in the practical jokes played upon Eugène Pelletan. Nor was that all. She also studied phrenology, and nursed her children through an attack of smallpox, and poured out romances for Buloz, who was exigent, having paid her in advance. There were times when she had to toil thirteen hours a day, and to sit all night at her desk, in order to keep pace with his demands.

One of her interruptions was a summons to her mother's deathbed. The frivolous little woman died as she had lived—still coquettish at the age of seventy. "Please put my hair straight," were her last recorded words. "I suffered a good deal at her hands. My worst troubles were due to her,"

wrote George Sand to her friend Papet; and we need not call her an unnatural daughter for making the confession. Madame Maurice Dupin was a silly woman as well as a loose woman; she had the mind and the manners, as well as the morals, of a daughter of the regiment, and must always have been a weight about her daughter's neck. Sympathy between them was impossible. The further statement in the letter to Papet that "she came at last to understand my character and to do me full justice" does not inspire conviction. As fairly might one speak of a sparrow understanding and doing justice to an eagle. George Sand, if we may trust her own report, had only loved her mother, as a child, from chivalrous perversity, to annoy her grandmother; and there is no reason to doubt that the loss was borne with easy resignation.

A more serious, and almost simultaneous trouble was due to the action of M. Dudevant, who kidnapped and carried off Solange "in spite of the child's piercing shrieks and the resistance of her governess." The news roused the mother to instant and indignant action. She "raised the Devil," as she puts it. She pursued the fugitives for three days and three nights in a post-chaise. She called in the police and set the law in motion. She overtook M. Dudevant, attended by a sub-prefect, an officer of gendarmes, and an armed escort—just in time, for M. Dudevant was on the point of taking refuge in Spain. The house in which he was staying was surrounded, and he was summoned to surrender. He had no choice but to do so; and Solange—a self-willed, obstinate child, whose screams probably had not been without their influence—was handed over to her mother "like a princess on the frontier of two States."

The date of these events is also, approximately, the date of

the final rupture with Michel. A few letters from George Sand to their common friend Frédéric Girerd supplement the documents already quoted with reference to this branch of the subject, but without really adding very much to our knowledge of it. Girerd, it seems, had warned her that the *liaison* would turn out badly, and she admits that he was right.

"You think that I am happy, my friend. Far from that. In addition to the painful illnesses in my house, I have suffered at Michel's hands all that you foresaw, and the predictions contained in your last letter have also been fulfilled. Weary of my devotion, having fought my pride with all the power of my love, and getting nothing but hardness and ingratitude for my reward, I have felt my soul broken and my love extinguished. Now I am cured. Do not congratulate me too warmly on this melancholy happiness, and yet do not pity me too much; for, *relatively speaking*, I have reason to be grateful to my destiny. These frightful agonies have yielded to their own excess. By dint of bleeding the wound is healed, and this time I am sure of myself: I love no longer. I feel that the veil has fallen, and that I have recovered my strength. I need it, for I feel that I have reached the lowest step on the ladder of disenchantment. But what matter? Are we on earth to be happy? Have we the right to be happy? We have put out to sea, and the will of the winds and the waves must be done."

That was apparently written in the spring of 1837, when the children were ill. Later letters show Michel anxious for the renewal of relations which have been suspended and George Sand refusing. "I cannot and *I will not*," she writes, and adds:—

"Some day, perhaps, Michel will realise that he has cruelly broken the most devoted heart that ever beat for him. If that time ever comes, and he desires my friendship, he will find in me a sentiment which age will have rendered more calm, but not less sincere and tender. But that time is far remote. Years will be needed to close the deep wound in my heart."

Michel, she continues, has expressed the wish to see her, but she would prefer not to meet him. She was quite sure that pride rather than affection was the motive of his wish. Would Girerd make excuses to him, and tell him that she was going away to an uncertain destination? But Michel persisted. Instead of going to visit George Sand, he peremptorily summoned her to visit him; and then she writes:—

"You think I didn't go? Then you are wrong. I galloped eight leagues on a chilly evening to see him for a moment. He spent two days with me. He was on his way to Niort; and, on his way back, though he had sworn he would never set foot at Nohant again, he turned up in the middle of the night. His kindness and tenderness are inconceivable after all the cruel incidents in our relations. For the rest, our respective positions are changed; and there have been such strange complications that I can only tell you about them by word of mouth. . . . Come and see me."

And the nature of those complications? The next letter, written only a few days later, gives us a glimpse of them.

"I think I have at last *struck down the dragon*, and I believe that this tenacious passion which was destroying all my faculties has been cured by a gentler affection, less enthusiastic, but not less durable. Michel is now safely sheltered from any despite that I might have felt towards him. He is in the element in which alone he can live. From time to time he sees some of my friends and tells them that I am the only woman he ever loved. What a love! But I no longer feel hurt. Calm and the sense of justice have re-entered my heart; and I love him to-day on the same terms on which you love him yourself. At least I flatter myself that it is so, and hope that it is so, and labour to make it so."

And this means, when we name the names, and put the dots upon the i's, that Eugène Pelletan had resigned his position as Maurice Sand's tutor and that Félicien Mallefille had been appointed in his place.

Madame Karénine, in her Life of George Sand, makes an unnecessary puzzle of Pelletan's departure. Apparently she has a lurking suspicion that he played the part of Joseph in the house of Potiphar's wife; but that explanation is hardly needed. He was a very young man, with a very keen sense of his personal dignity; and that dignity had not been respected. The apple-pie beds, the false sausage, and the other "*poissons d'Avril*" upset his unstable equanimity. He wrote to a friend complaining of the strange treatment accorded to tutors in that extraordinary establishment. George Sand saw the letter, suspected its contents, opened it and read it. It was inevitable, after that, that he must either resign or be dismissed; and we find a not unnatural reflection of the rupture in the fact that he and his pupil cut each other when they passed in the streets of Paris. Mallefille succeeded

him. First he was private tutor; then he was private secretary; then he supplied that gentle affection, devoid of enthusiasm, which consoled George Sand for the loss of the love of Michel. Or, at any rate, he supplied a portion of it for a period.

The episode is rather obscure. George Sand and Mallefille, living in the same house, had no need to correspond; consequently there are no letters to be quoted; and the story, in so far as it can be reconstructed, is full of contradictions. George Sand, in writing about Mallefille, always took the tone of one who was suffering a fool, and not suffering him particularly gladly. She laughed at him for having "a beard seven feet long," and also for not having any sense. She expressed the wish that he would be more intelligent for a change, and the opinion that some foolish proceeding of his on which she commented was "even more foolish than usual." And we find Madame d'Agoult writing :—

"Do you remember how we quarrelled about M——? How ugly, and stupid, and silly, and vain, and insufferable he was! You seemed to be animated towards him with such furious rage as Homer puts in the hearts of Juno and Venus; and I was obliged to tell you *a mezza voce* that I thought it was necessary to try to live on terms of peace with other people's little vanities, though living on terms with one's own vanity was perhaps the most difficult task of all."

And yet Mallefille, however conceited, was not a fool, for he lived not only to "ghost" for Dumas, but also to write plays for the national theatre, and to be the diplomatic representative of his country at the Portuguese Court; and his

status, in spite of the disdain expressed for him, was indubitably that of a lover. Balzac bears witness to the fact in one of the "Lettres à L'Etrangère"; and so do the journalists who wrote his obituary notices when he died. In later life, we gather from these necrologies, he became the intimate friend of Jules Sandeau; and the two men used often to sit together, exchanging reminiscences of the woman who had been the mistress of both of them.

It is a confused and confusing condition of things, and one must reconcile the conflicting facts as best one can. Presumably Mallefille's alleged lack of intelligence was only the *gaucherie* of an unformed youth; and it also seems fair to presume that that *gaucherie* was more objectionable to Madame d'Agoult than to George Sand herself. At all events, his *gaucherie* ultimately caused quarrels between them, a good deal more deadly than those referred to in the letter quoted.

Mallefille presumed to write a letter to Madame d'Agoult, and Madame d'Agoult took offence, and held George Sand responsible. George Sand, she said, had had Mallefille in the house quite long enough to teach him the art of polite letter writing; whence it may be inferred that Mallefille had expressed himself without sufficient regard for the reverence which is due to ladies of the *ancienne noblesse* even when they run from their husbands to live with wandering musicians. George Sand showed the letter to Mallefille, and he also insisted that the fault was hers; so that there ensued a lively three-cornered duel of recriminations.

The recriminations, however, were not the immediate cause of Mallefille's withdrawal from Nohant; and his place in George Sand's life may be best defined as that of a later analogue of Pagello. Just as Pagello had been her tem-

porary refuge from Musset's passionate extravagances, so she fell back for a while upon Mallefille when Michel became too dictatorial. The force of habit had made a lover necessary; but she wanted a lover who would not impose too severe a strain upon a heart which had latterly been overtaxed—a lover too weak to make trouble or cause remorse when the time came, as she foresaw that it would, to treat him badly.

In the course of six months or so, the time came, and she did treat Mallefille badly, and with a *sans-gêne* which was characteristic of her. Tiring of intimacy, she suspended it, with as little to-do as a sultan makes when deposing a harem favourite, proposing that the tutor, though excluded from her embraces, should still live in her house and teach her son.

As no letters passed, it is impossible to say exactly what was Mallefille's attitude towards the proposition. Apparently he was willing to accept his diminished status—believing, perhaps, that he had only been provisionally degraded—until he discovered that a rival had supplanted him. He soon suspected a rival, however; and presently we find George Sand writing to her new friend, Pierre Leroux, that Mallefille has been making scandals about her, and provoking her friends to duels. For the moment, she says, he seems to have got over his excitement; but she fears that the trouble may recommence at any time. Will Leroux, therefore, please go to see him, and try to calm him down?

"When the question of women comes up between you," she says, "tell him emphatically that women do not belong to men by the right of brute force, and that he will gain nothing by cutting anybody's throat." And she adds: "Pray be the saviour of the drowning man, and the consoler

of the unknown martyr who has adopted a profession which he detests, but will not abandon it because of the responsibility that rests upon his shoulders."

Pierre Leroux went upon this strange errand, and discharged it with success. Then he returned to Nohant and became the successor of the man whom he had "saved."

CHAPTER XXI

Balzac's visit to Nohant : His estimate of George Sand's character : Pierre Leroux dismissed to the empyrean : The origin of the amour with Chopin.

BALZAC'S report to Madame de Hanska * of his visit to George Sand at Nohant runs, the inessential being eliminated, as follows :—

"CARA CONTESSINA,—Hearing that George Sand was at her country seat at Nohant, a short distance from Frapesle, I went to call on her ; so you shall have the autographs you want ; and as you are as inquisitive as you are eminent—or as eminent as you are inquisitive—I will tell you the story of my visit.

"I arrived at Nohant on the Saturday before Ash Wednesday at about half-past seven in the evening, and I found our comrade George Sand in her dressing-gown, smoking her after-dinner cigar by the fireside in an immense and lonely room. She was wearing pretty yellow slippers ornamented with fringes, neat stockings, and red pantaloons. That was her moral aspect ; physically she had a double chin like an ecclesiastic. In spite of her fearful misfortunes, she has not a white hair on her head ; her dark complexion remains unaltered ; her eyes are as bright as ever. . . . She has been at Nohant for a year, in a melancholy mood, working terribly hard. Her manner of life bears a close resemblance to my own. She goes to bed at six in the morning, and gets up at midday, whereas I go to bed at six in the evening and get up at midnight ; but, naturally I have adapted my habits to hers, and for three days we have regularly gossiped from five

* The "Etrangère" with whom Balzac corresponded for so long, and whom he ultimately married.

in the evening—after dinner—until five in the morning, with the result that I have come to know her better than during the four years when she used to visit me from time to time—better than when she was in love with Sandeau, better than when she was living with Musset.

"There was some advantage in my seeing her, for we exchanged confidences concerning Sandeau. I was the last man to blame her for leaving him; to-day I only feel a profound compassion for her. She was still more unhappy, however, with Musset; and now she is living in complete retirement, condemning both marriage and love, since both these estates have brought her nothing but deceptions.

"Her male complement was rare—that is all that there is to be said; and her male complement will be the more difficult to find because she is not amiable and cannot win affection. She is a female bachelor, she is an artist, she is great, she is generous, she is devoted, she is *chaste*. Her dominant characteristics are those of a man. *Therefore*, she is not to be regarded as a woman. While talking to her for three days, and opening my heart to her on all subjects, I never once arrived at that superficial gallantry of manner which one is expected, in France and Poland, to display in conversing with every woman. I felt that I was chatting with a comrade. . . . We discussed with a high seriousness, a good faith, a candour and a conscientiousness worthy of great shepherds guiding human flocks, the great questions of marriage and liberty. For, as she said with an immense pride to which I myself should not have ventured to aspire: 'Our writings are paving the way for a revolution in the morals of the future, but I see the drawbacks of the one condition as clearly as those of the other.' And we sat up all night discussing this great problem. . . . I have made great

headway if I have persuaded Madame Dudevant to recognise the necessity of marriage; but I am sure that she will come to believe in it, and I think I have done her some good in demonstrating it to her.

"She is an excellent mother, adored by her children; but she dresses her daughter Solange as a boy—and that is bad. *Morally* she is like a lad of twenty; for, in her heart of hearts, she is *chaste* and a *prude*. It is only in externals that she comports herself as an artist. She smokes a great deal more than is good for her; perhaps she is a little too fond of assuming the airs of a princess, and I am convinced that she drew a faithful picture of herself in the princess of the 'Secrétaire Intime.' . . . Like myself, she laughs at the glory which she has achieved, and has a profound contempt for the public, which she styles '*Jumento*.'

"If I were to relate to you this woman's immense and secret devotion to two men, you would say that angels and devils have nothing in common. All her follies are titles to glory in the eyes of those whose souls are noble. She has been duped by Dorval, by Bocage, by Lamennais. In the same way she is the dupe of Liszt and Madame d'Agoult—but she is beginning to see it, for she has a powerful intelligence, capable of recovering lost ground.

"Apropos of Liszt and Madame d'Agoult, she gave me the subject of 'Les Galériens,' or 'Amours forcés.' I am going to make something of it, for she in her position cannot."

That was written on March 2, 1838. From the allusion to the "Secrétaire Intime" we may gather that Mallefille was still in favour; while from the nature of the allusion, and from the environing remarks, we may also infer that Mallefille was not taken seriously. He had no hold upon his mistress

through passion, like Musset; he could not dominate her through his intellect like Michel; there was hardly even any sentimental link between them. He was merely a nonentity on whom she imposed an obligation; and it seemed absurd to her that he should be angry when released from it. She had not intended to engage his heart; he had therefore no right to assume that his vanity was compromised. He was an amorous boy, and must be taught to see things in their true proportion. Leroux must call on him, and lecture him; his reward should be to supplant the youth whom he admonished.

And so, as we have seen, it happened; only Leroux was another of those who passed but lightly through George Sand's life, leaving but little trace behind.

His education had been interrupted through the financial embarrassments of his parents. Withdrawn from the Ecole Polytechnique, he had had to make a fresh start in life as a stonemason and a compositor, and had found that the way out lay through journalism. He had edited the *Globe*, making it the organ of Saint-Simonism, but had found himself unable to go all the way with Père Enfantin. He could not accept free love in theory, though in practice the flesh might be weak. So he seceded, and thought out a system of his own—an eclectic system to which Buddha and Pythagoras contributed—and, if only he had had more followers, might have become a great intellectual leader.

George Sand, however, was a follower—at all events for a season. An "influence" had come to be as necessary to her as a lover. Only by pot-boiling under an influence could she persuade herself that she raised pot-boiling to the dignity of preaching. It was not necessary that the lover should also be the influence, or that the influence should also be the

lover; but the coincidence tended to occur from time to time, and it occurred in the case of Pierre Leroux, though their intimacy was only, as it were, a passing salutation.

He was an absent-minded man, whose proper dwelling-place was in the clouds of abstract speculation. His helplessness in the ordinary situations of everyday life is illustrated by the account which he gave to George Sand of a call which he paid upon Madame d'Agoult: "I was all splashed with mud, and felt ashamed of myself, and tried to hide in a corner. *The lady* came and spoke to me with incredible kindness. How beautiful she was!" But he could not remember whether she was short or tall, or fair or dark, and, asked how he knew her to be beautiful, could only answer, "I don't know. But she was carrying a beautiful bouquet, and I inferred that she herself must also be beautiful and good."

That is how the philosopher dreamed his way through the world; and George Sand's task was to draw the dreamer down to the realities. She and Madame Marliani had some plan for secretly defraying the cost of the education of his children; but he found them out, and his pride brought the scheme to nothing. Calumny accused them of getting drunk together, on Sunday afternoons, in suburban restaurants, and reeling home arm-in-arm; but the charge is not very credible. The real descent from the clouds only took place when he became her lover; and the re-ascent was a natural and easy process. Leroux was not sensitive, like Mallefille. His love was of his life a thing apart—an act of civility, perhaps—an incident, at any rate, to which he attached very little importance. To get rid of him was as easy as saying good-bye at the end of an afternoon call. There was no breach in the continuity of either influence or friendship: the friendship was merely transferred from the lower to the higher plane.

Pierre Leroux and George Sand, therefore, ceasing to be lovers, continued to be fellow-fighters in Humanitarian causes. They even started the *Revue Indépendante* together because, when Leroux offered to write an article on "God" for the *Revue des deux Mondes*, Buloz declared the subject to be "lacking in actuality." But the sentimental connection was over long before that alliance was concluded, and was never to be renewed. From that point of view they were ships that had passed in the night and spoken each other in passing. Leroux's course was presently to lead him through politics to exile. George Sand's had already led her to the Balearic Isles with Chopin.

She had known the musician for a couple of years—quite uneventfully. He was not disposed to like her, and Madame d'Agoult had done her best to prejudice her against him. "Chopin coughs very gracefully," she had written; and also: "Chopin is the most inconstant of men; there is nothing permanent about him but his cough." And George Sand had not cared whether that was so or not; for those were the days of her devotion to Michel de Bourges.

Presently, however, came the rupture with Michel; and after the rupture with Michel came the rupture with Mallefille; and Leroux hardly counted, but was ready to be dismissed to the empyrean at any time. That was the condition of things when George Sand and Chopin met again.

He was sad—so the story goes—for a woman whom he had loved had proved untrue. Marie Wodzinska—but that story would be out of place upon this page. He mourned for Marie Wodzinska; and the theme on which he improvised as he sat at the piano was a lamentation; and George Sand stood beside him—listening—leaning towards him—looking into his eyes—intoxicating him with the odour of

violets. He finished and looked up, and met her gaze; and she bent down, without a word, and kissed him on the lips.

According to one version of the story, she thus kissed Chopin on the first occasion on which she met him, without even waiting for him to be presented to her; but that seems to be untrue. She waited two years, and dismissed three lovers, before taking the initiative; but it was she and not Chopin who took it. He accepted the gift which she offered; and her kiss sealed him to her for eight years.

CHAPTER XXII

Chopin's early struggles : His sudden success : His proposal of marriage to Marie Wodzinska : The meeting with George Sand and the decision to travel together to Majorca.

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN was the son of Nicolas Chopin, who kept a boarding-school at Warsaw. Of course he was precocious, and of course he was petted by a society to which he did not, by birth, belong: the biographies of great musicians always run upon those lines. Of course, too, he left his little provincial town to conquer the capitals; and of course he met with sentimental adventures by the way.

He was a man of genius—as much greater than Liszt as Liszt was greater than Thalberg; an artist as well as a virtuoso; a creater as well as an executant; self-confident, but not self-conscious; with an artist's narrow intensity of vision, purpose, and interests. He was not, like Liszt, blown about by every wind of fashionable doctrine, but accepted, without question, the Catholic creed of his fathers. Nor did he, like Liszt, run after women. He needed their sympathy, indeed; but it came to him unsought, and it never filled his life. He let himself be loved—and waited upon—and went on with his work. Love was for him a comforting balm, not a consuming fire.

His early struggles in Paris though short were rather sharp. He gave a concert and lost money over it. Kalkbrenner assumed patronising airs and proposed to take him as his pupil for three years, whereas Chopin was quite sure that he played at least as well as Kalkbrenner. He husbanded his resources carefully, but they were nearly exhausted. A woman tempted him. She was young and beautiful, and neglected by her husband, and "musical," and she lived on the same staircase

as the musician. Would he not call? she asked. Would he not spend the afternoon with her? But he refused, held back not by the principles of an austere virtue, but by a sense of shame at his own poverty. So one gathers from the cry of pain that escaped him in a letter to a friend. "At least," he wrote, "I should have found a good chimney corner and a good fire. Ah! How I should like to warm myself!" But he was proud, and preferred to shiver.

The day came when he nearly had to acknowledge himself beaten. He even made up his mind to leave Europe and try his fortune in America. "To-morrow," he wrote to his parents, "I shall cross the sea;" but at the eleventh hour an accident saved him from that necessity. His compatriot, Prince Valentin Radziwill, met him in the street, and took him, the same evening, to a reception given by Baron James de Rothschild. He played, and triumphed. Pupils offered themselves; invitations were showered upon him. He became of a sudden the fashion—the darling of the drawing-rooms—the rival, though also the friend, of Liszt.

That was towards the end of 1831; and for five years from that date Chopin was both prosperous and happy. "*Me voilà lancé!*" he writes. "I mix in the very best society. I have my place in it beside ambassadors, princes, and ministers, though how I got there I don't know. . . . Pixis has put my name on his orchestral variations. Kalkbrenner himself has taken one of my mazurkas as the theme of one of his *improvisations*. Conservatoire pupils—pupils, that is to say, of Moscheles and Herz—artists of consummate merit—come to me for lessons, and assign me a position in the art of music at least equal to that of Field. . . . I have five lessons to give in the course of the morning; but don't imagine that I am making my fortune. My hired carriage,

and my white gloves, without which I should not be 'good form,' cost me more than I am earning."

The last statement, of course, was a playful exaggeration. Chopin was not amassing a fortune, but his income sufficed for his needs. He could afford to break up the furniture when incompetent pupils struck false notes—and sometimes he did. He could afford to be arrogant with bourgeois who tried to patronise him, and sometimes he was. This is the period of the famous retort, "Really, sir, I have eaten so little," discharged at the *nouveau riche* who had invited him to a dinner party in the hope of obtaining a gratuitous musical entertainment. His real friends, in whose society he lived naturally and happily, were musicians and other artists: Berlioz, Liszt, and Meyerbeer; Delacroix; Nourrit; his compatriot poets Mickiewics and Slovacki; and Henri Heine, who exclaimed in his enthusiasm, "Cherished child of the Muses, Polish by birth, German by poetry, Italian by art, French by your lucidity and elegance, you are the fellow-countryman of all of us."

It was during these five years of happiness, too, that Chopin visited Germany. He went to Aix-la-Chapelle, to Carlsbad, to Dresden, to Marienbad. He saw his father, whose ailments had driven him to drink the waters; he met Mendelssohn, and Schumann, and Clara Wieck, and Wenzel. Above all, he met—and loved—and was separated from—Marie Wodzinska.

They had met before. Her brothers—one of whom became one of Chopin's biographers—had been pupils at Nicolas Chopin's boarding-school; and she had been taken there by her mother to visit them. He had even given her music lessons, when she was a child of five and he a child of ten, dressed in the beautiful velvet suit to which he attributed his

first artistic triumphs. They had exchanged such vows as such children do exchange, and grew up remembering them; and so the time passed until Fritz—she called him Fritz—went abroad to seek fame and fortune in a foreign land, and Marie was taken by her mother to finish her education at Geneva.

Their hearts were hardly faithful—exclusively faithful, at all events—in the years that followed. That would have been too much to expect, seeing that they were both young, and both, in several ways, successful. Chopin, as we have seen, was a success in the salon as well as the concert hall; and Marie Wodzinska was surrounded by admirers. Louis Napoleon, then an exile in Switzerland and an artillery officer at Thun, was one of them, and called her his "dark-eyed daughter of Euterpe." The Polish poet Slovacki, already mentioned, was another. Sometimes Marie Wodzinska corresponded with Chopin while flirting with Slovacki; sometimes she corresponded with Slovacki while flirting with Chopin. While travelling about the Continent, she contrived to meet them alternately in different towns, and she seems to have inspired them both: Chopin to waltzes, Slovacki to his famous poem entitled "En Suisse." Evidently she flirted her way through life, unconscious of impending tragedy.

The tragedy—if tragedy it is to be called—came to its crisis when, after long periods of dalliance at Dresden and Marienbad, Chopin mustered his courage and declared himself, proposing marriage. That, of course, was the cue for the head of the family to enter and forbid the banns. He was a nobleman. The daughter of a nobleman could not marry a musican—least of all a musician whom the world only knew as a strolling pianoforte player. It sounds a hard saying to us who know Chopin; but the prejudice is hardly peculiar to the period.

Most noblemen would take the same tone towards pianist suitors even to-day; and it sounds, in view of all the circumstances, a good deal less offensive than "La Comtesse d'Agoult ne sera jamais Madame Liszt." That was a case of feline and improper pride. Of poor Marie Wodzinska one can say no more than that she feared her fate too much, and that her desert was small. Her lover pressed her to defy authority; but her answer, as she confided to her brother, was "that she would never oppose the will of her parents, and did not think she would be able to influence their will, but that, whatever happened, her heart would always, always, gratefully remember his affection."

So they parted; and, a year later, Marie married Count Skarbeck. The marriage was unhappy, and the Pope was persuaded to declare it null; but a second union with a M. Orpiszewski was more fortunate. The wife nursed the husband for eighteen years, and survived him, and still played Chopin's music in preference to any other; while Chopin, on his part, kept the faded rose which she had given him at Dresden. It was found, after his death, in an envelope tied up with black ribbon, in sign of mourning, and bearing the Polish inscription "Moi bie da"—which means, being interpreted, "my trouble, my grief, my regrets, my torment, and my burden."

No doubt the rose did mean all that for him—at certain hours. It stood for an illusion in which he could always believe because he had never put it to the test—the mirage which had never dissolved because he had always kept his distance from it. He had dreamt of settling down with Marie in some provincial Polish place, teaching music in happy obscurity, and so finding an escape from life: he had had no experience to teach him that, wherever the escape

from life may lie, the path to it is not through the Philistia of the provinces;. he could dream his dream over again as often as his heart was sore and tired.

Only that did not mean that he was inconsolable—far from it. The more acute his distress, the greater his need for consolation; and his sense of the need of an escape from life was the more intense because the strain of overwork and excessive excitement had told upon him, and he was ill. Though doctors denied it, the seeds of phthisis had almost certainly been sown. He needed love; and he also needed rest and sunshine—to be waited upon and worshipped while he basked in one of the back-waters of life. That was his condition—moral and physical—when George Sand listened to his playing, and flashed her luminous dark eyes on him, and kissed him on the lips, and made him come to see her every day, and finally carried him off to spend a winter with her in the Balearic Isles.

Which of the two actually proposed that they should travel together one does not know. Karsowski says that the suggestion was Chopin's; Liszt that it was George Sand's: the statements in "L'Histoire de ma Vie" are vague and non-committal; from Chopin, owing to the gaps in his correspondence, we have no statement at all. All that we do know for certain is that Chopin was very far from flaunting his *liaison* after the manner of Musset. Instead of making a public departure with his mistress, as Musset did, in the public coach, he stole away secretly to join her at Perpignan. Only a few of his most intimate friends were in his confidence, and these he implored not to betray him. Even the selection of such a *terra incognita* as Majorca in preference to any well-known winter city must, one surmises, have been due to his desire to evade observation. The sudden change in George Sand's

plans disclosed in the Correspondence cannot be accounted for on any other theory.

Early in October her intention was to go to either Switzerland or Italy for the benefit of her son's health; and she wrote to that effect to Major Adolphe Pictet, of Geneva, asking him for practical information as to prices, apartments, etc., and adding that she wished to avoid "the English, the water-drinkers, and the trippers." Perhaps he replied that, in the neighbourhood of Geneva, trippers were hardly to be avoided. At all events, we find her, a little later in the same month, at Lyons, *en route* for Perpignan, Port Vendres, Barcelona, and Palma de Mallorca, proclaiming as she went, in all her many letters to all her many friends, the very secret which her companion was imploring his own correspondents to keep.

CHAPTER XXIII

Life in Majorca : The travellers find an apartment in a Carthusian convent in the mountains : Discomfort and demoralisation : Departure : Chopin invites himself to Nohant : George Sand hesitates, but decides that he may come.

GEORGE SAND has written that the journey to Majorca was "a fiasco." M. Rocheblave has written that "as a piece of insanity it was the proper pendant to the journey to Venice." The fiasco, however, was rather material than moral, and so was the disillusion. No ugly awakening, as at Venice, succeeded the mad hallucination. One says that confidently in spite of the suggestion on the last page of "Un hiver à Majorque," where we read :—

"The moral of this narrative—childish, it may be, but sincere—is that man is made to live, not with the trees and the rocks, and the pure sky, and the blue sea, and the flowers and the hills, but with his fellow-men.

"In the stormy days of our youth we imagine that solitude is the great refuge against all the assaults of the world, the great remedy for the wounds incurred in the struggle. It is a grave mistake, and the teaching of the experience of life is that, when we cannot live in peace with our fellow-creatures, no poetical admiration and no artistic joy is capable of filling the abysm that has been formed in the depths of our soul.

"It had always been my dream to live in the desert ; and that is a whim which every good dreamer knows. But, take my word for it, my brothers, we have too much love in our hearts to be able to do without each other, and our best plan is to put up with each other. We are like children suckled at the same breast, who quarrel, and even fight, but still must not be separated."

All of which may be true enough in a general way—it even sounds like a reply, with poetical embellishments, to Chopin's hope that he and Marie Wodzinska might find a haven from the storms of life in the quietude of a Polish provincial town—but must be read as a piece of literature, or rhetoric, irrelevant to the circumstances of the journey to Majorca. For the strain upon affection, or self-sufficiency, which the passage indicates was never really imposed. The party—George Sand aged thirty-four, Chopin aged twenty-eight, Maurice Sand aged fifteen, and Solange aged ten—had assuredly resources enough, especially after the importation of a piano, to last them for four months. They had their work, and the means of recreation, and the society of children, and a glorious Southern climate. But they lacked the comforts, and were hard put to it to procure even the necessaries, of life.

The Balearic Isles, as the travellers discovered, had hardly yet emerged from barbarism. Their one link with the external world consisted in the export trade in pigs ; and the passengers on their steamboats travelled, as it were by favour, in the midst of pigs—a squeaking, grunting race, not less liable than human beings to sea-sickness. Moreover, even in the capital, there was no hotel or inn of any sort. As George Sand says :—

"At Palma one needs to bring introductions to a score of the most prominent citizens, and to be expected for several months before one arrives, if one is not to find oneself obliged to sleep in the open air. The best that could be done for us was to provide us with two furnished (or rather unfurnished) rooms in a miserable locality in which strangers often consider themselves fortunate to be supplied with a truckle bed apiece,

mattresses about as soft as bags of slates, straw-seated chairs, and, by way of provisions, as much pepper and garlic as they can eat."

Somehow or other they managed to find a furnished house which they hired for £4 a month; and Chopin at any rate began to be happy.

"Here I am," he writes to his friend Fontana, "in the midst of palms and cedars and cactuses and olives and oranges and lemons and aloes and figs and pomegranates. The sky is a turquoise blue, the sea is azure, the mountains are emerald green; the air is pure like the air of paradise. All day long the sun shines and it is warm, and everybody walks about in summer clothes. At night one hears guitars and serenades. Vines are festooned on immense balconies; Moorish walls rise all around us; the town, like everything else, speaks of Africa. In a word, it is an enchanted life that we are living."

The enchantment was shortlived, however, and the delight evaporated when the winter rains began to fall. The house was not built to resist either damp or cold. The plaster on the walls was like a wet sponge. The travellers could hardly endure the odour of the brasiers over which they shivered. Chopin began to cough. A doctor was called in, and prescribed, but "only detestable drugs could be procured." The word was passed round that the sufferer was in consumption, and the Majorcans, unwittingly anticipating modern science, dreaded the contagion as they dreaded that of the cholera or the plague, though also declaring, inconsistently enough, that it was a curse of God, a punishment of evil deeds,

and therefore a presumptive proof of impiety. The landlord begged politely, but peremptorily, that his tenants would be so good as to evacuate the premises with the least possible delay.

They did so, having indeed no choice, though not knowing where next to lay their heads; and fortune favoured them. Up in the mountains was a Carthusian monastery, evacuated by the brethren whom a recent law had dispersed; and the cells could be hired by the laity as apartments. It happened that a certain political refugee who was living there was willing not only to sub-let his apartment, but also to sell his furniture for £40. The bargain was struck, and the party climbed the hill, and settled down in their new residence in the midst of pine forests, overlooking the tree-clad plain and the Mediterranean. "In the month of December," says George Sand, "and in spite of the recent rains, the torrent was only a charming brook babbling among the grass and flowers. The mountain smiled on us, and the valley opened at our feet like a valley in spring." And Chopin was happy, and wrote gaily of his adventures among the doctors at Palma.

"All the three doctors in the island came to my bedside to consult. One of them said that I should die eventually, another that I was then dying, and the third that I was already dead; and yet, in spite of them, I continue to live just as I lived before they were called in."

And then he describes his new retreat, and his life therein.

"Lost between the rocks and the sea, in an immense deserted convent of the Carthusians, confined in a cell, the

one door of which is rather larger than the gates of Paris, you may picture your Frédéric, with his hair all out of curl, deprived of his white gloves, and as pale as ever. My cell is about as large as a coffin, a vault thick with dust serving as a lid. The windows are small, and underneath these windows grow orange trees, palms, and cypresses. Opposite to them, underneath a rose window in the Arabian style, is my bed. Close to the bed is a small table; and on this table—a great luxury—stand a metal candlestick, holding a miserable candle, the works of Bach, and my own compositions in manuscript. That is the full list of my belongings. And what a silence! One may shout at the top of one's voice, and no one will hear. Truly Nature is beautiful, though relations with the inhabitants of these solitudes are best avoided."

Evidently it was not Chopin who found the flight into the wilderness disappointing. He lived, not in a passionate ecstasy, but in a calm contentment, enjoying the illusion of the haven of rest, admired, nursed, and cosseted. He accepted the attention, apparently, as a matter of course—the proper privilege of genius in physical distress. It would not even seem that he admitted the right of his mistress to a separate artistic life. She was welcome, of course, to "make copy" for Buloz: Buloz paid her for doing so, and the money was required. But the task was mechanical, commanding no more respect than is due to all honest toil. The author was no torch-bearer handing on the sacred flame. That was her patient's function; hers was merely to keep the flame alive in him, standing between him and the rude buffetings of the world. So long as she thus protected him, he would not complain. He had all the society he needed, and, for the rest, his art sufficed.

His position, in short, was pretty much what hers had been when she and Pagello had kept house together on the lagoons of Venice.

But she, on her part, was overworked, and was anxious and worried about many things. She had to sit up all night to earn her living—she was just then writing "Spiridion"—and in the daytime she had to face all the trouble with the servants and the tradespeople, as well as to give lessons to Maurice and Solange. Meat, other than pork, was hardly to be procured; the poultry were often diseased, and had no flesh upon their bones; cow's milk was not to be had, and the children who delivered the goat's milk drank most of it, and filled up the measure with water. The simplest articles of furniture—any piece of bedroom crockery even, other than a jug or basin—had to be imported from Barcelona. The delivery of such goods—and indeed of all goods—was irregular, because the steamers always awaited the convenience of the pigs. The Custom House charges were exorbitant—seven hundred francs being demanded, though somewhat less was ultimately taken, for the admission of Chopin's piano. Moreover, the general servant struck work, so that George Sand had to add cooking and sweeping to her other duties; while Chopin's health continued to be far from satisfactory. Says the "Histoire de ma Vie":—

"The great artist—poor man—was a perfectly detestable patient. The thing which I had feared—though I had not feared it sufficiently—happened; and he became completely demoralised. Actual suffering he bore with courage, but he could not overcome the uneasiness of his imagination. Even when he was well, the cloister seemed to him to be full of terrors and phantoms. He did not say so, but I could divine

it. When I returned from my nocturnal explorations of the ruins with my children, I used to find him, at ten o'clock at night, sitting at his piano, pallid, with haggard eyes, and hair standing on end. It was always a minute or two before he could recognise us.

"It was there that he composed the finest of the short pieces which he modestly styled Preludes. They are masterpieces. Several of them bring visions of departed monks before your mind's eye, and make you listen to funeral songs; others are of a gentle melancholy, and these came to him at the hours of sunshine and good health, when he heard the laughter of the children underneath his window, or the distant music of guitars, or the songs of the birds in the damp foliage.

"Others again are deeply sorrowful, and rend your heart while they delight your ear. There is one in particular which came to him on an evening of lugubrious rain. He had been feeling well that day, and Maurice and I had left him to go to Palma to make some necessary purchases. The rains had begun, and the torrents had overflowed their banks. We had travelled three leagues in six hours, and arrived at the dead of night, shoeless, deserted by our driver, having escaped incredible dangers. We made haste, because we knew that our invalid would be uneasy about us. He had been so, in fact, but his anxiety had been, as it were, transformed into a kind of tranquil despair, and he was playing his admirable Prelude, weeping while he played. As he saw us enter, he rose, uttering a loud cry, and then said, in strange tones, and an absent-minded manner, 'Ah, yes, I knew that you were dead.'"

Perhaps we may pass the criticism that this is not demorali-

sation, but the artistic temperament misunderstood, as George Sand was strangely apt to misunderstand it. Her own eccentricities, though often extravagant, were always commonplace, deliberate, and predictable. She defied the conventions with the regularity of a clockwork machine, even though she must work fourteen hours a day in order to be able to afford to do so. That was how she understood the eccentricity of genius: the unexpected, the incalculable—the wind blowing where it listed—always puzzled her. That was one of the incompatibilities which separated her and Musset; and that is why she thought Chopin "demoralised" when inspiration possessed him.

Certainly there is no trace of demoralisation in the scraps of his own letters to Fontana. They are very sane letters, and quite cheerful. The invalid, effectively shielded, bears up brightly in them. It was George Sand's nerves, not his, that were affected—and that though her nerves were robust.

One cannot wonder. For months she had been living on her nerves, and burning the candle at both ends, acting at one and the same time as breadwinner, children's governess, cook, housekeeper, and sick-nurse. Every one in her employ—every one with whom she did business—had tried to rob her; the peasants had looked askance at her because she did not go to church. To crown all, her patient spat blood, and she herself endured rheumatic pains. It was clearly necessary for them to go, and the sooner they went the better. The pigs kept them waiting for three weeks, but at last they were at liberty to depart.

Chopin, George Sand says, had been querulous; but it is likely enough that his querulousness was at least as much due to her rheumatism as to his cough. Both ailments alike were relieved when they returned, in the spring, to the South of

France; and, after a brief excursion to Genoa, Chopin proposed to his mistress that he should accompany her to Nohant and stay there.

It appears that she hesitated—or so, at least, the untrustworthy Autobiography says. She had intended a honeymoon—and nothing more; she shrank from forming fresh ties and contracting new obligations. The illusions of passion did not blind her eyes. Her feelings towards the artist were of a maternal character; but that did not mean that she would sacrifice the interests of her children to him. She was, moreover, still young enough to fear lest she might have to struggle against "passion properly so called." She dreaded this eventuality to which "artists" were particularly liable—"especially when they had a horror of transitory distractions." Her tender feeling for the musician might end by assuming this more passionate shape. It would be deplorable. And yet——

And yet, of course, there was an alternative possibility. The tender feeling might prove to be not a danger but a safeguard. The friendship might stand between George Sand and the passion which she dreaded—especially as it was a friendship to which that much-abused word "Platonic" was not to be applied. The friends were to be lovers at certain hours, and the lovers were always to be friends. A friendship conceived in that spirit, and hedged about by those conditions, might endure—might, in a way, calm and balance the emotions. It was an experiment—but one worth trying. Better this quiet satisfaction than the pursuit of perpetual adventure—better for her work, better for her family, more suited to her age.

So ran the course of the sophistry to which she yielded. To what extent Chopin himself pressed her, believing that

her mission was, still and always, to shield genius from the buffetings of a rough world, one does not know. What one does know is that, in the end, she did invite him to Nohant, and that he accepted the invitation, and stayed with her, there and in Paris, for the next eight years.

CHAPTER XXIV

The destruction of George Sand's letters to Chopin : The recovery of Chopin's letters to his family : "Vie rangée" : The life at Nohant : The verdict of Mlle. de Rozières : "Love is no longer there."

MINUTE and well-attested particulars of George Sand's life with Chopin are not very easy to collect. *Habent sua fata libelli.* The documents which might have been expected to throw full light upon the episode have had strange histories.

In the voluminous Correspondence there is hardly a word upon the matter. That collection contains only a single short letter to Chopin, written at Cambrai in August 1840, and consisting of little but mockery of the bourgeois citizens of that provincial town. It is not in any sense a love letter. The writer does not even "thee-and-thou" her lover. "Aimez votre vieille comme elle vous aime,"—"Love your old woman as she loves you,"—is her only affectionate phrase.

There were other letters—presumably of a more ardent and certainly of a more intimate character—but these have perished. Dumas fils discovered them by accident in a police station on the Polish frontier, where he was detained through some trouble about his passport. The chief of the Police gave them to him to read, to beguile the tedium of his detention. He asked permission to remove them and restore them to their rightful owner. This request being refused, he borrowed them for twenty-four hours, seized the opportunity to steal them, conveyed them to France, and sent them to George Sand with his compliments. She burned them, and said, in her letter of thanks :—

"Assuredly there were no secrets there ; and it is a matter

for boasting rather than blushing that I nursed and consoled like a child this noble and incurable heart. But the correspondence had its secret side, and you know what it was. It was nothing of any great gravity, but I should not have liked to see it commented upon and magnified. . . . These family revelations might assume importance in malevolent eyes; and it would have been very painful to me to open to the world this mysterious volume of my private life."

So the parcel was thrown into the fire; and Dumas, with proper delicacy, destroyed the notes which he had taken of its contents.

The letters in the custody of Chopin's family were long believed to have perished too. In the course of the Polish insurrection of 1863 a bomb was thrown from the house of Chopin's sister, Isabelle Barcinska, who had charge of them. The Russian soldiers invaded the house and sacked it. They smashed the musician's piano, and tore up his portrait by Ary Scheffer; and it was supposed, as all the earlier biographers tell us, that his papers had disappeared at the same time. The legend had, in fact, been spread for the purpose of putting the curious off the scent; the Chopin family had kept the papers, wishing to choose their own hour for the publication. They were not printed, therefore, until 1904; and even then the representatives of George Sand's family forbade the publication, in France, of any of the letters written either by her or by her daughter. These letters are only to be found in the Polish edition, published in Warsaw, of M. Karlowics' "Souvenirs inédits de Chopin."

The story of the *liaison*, in so far as it is written anywhere, is written in those letters; but the collection is apparently incomplete. No doubt the Russian soldiers, though they did

not destroy everything, made away with a good deal. The letters relating to several entire years are lacking; and even when all the sources are laid under contribution, a full consecutive narrative of the episode remains impossible.

So far as externals go, the incidents—at least until the beginning of the end—are few, and of little interest or importance. Chopin spent his summers with George Sand at Nohant, and wintered with her in Paris. At Nohant he composed, generally selling his compositions at three hundred francs a-piece; in Paris he gave lessons, at twenty francs the lesson. The Paris address was, at first, Rue Tronchet, and afterwards Square d'Orléans; and we have Chopin's letter of directions to his pupil Fontana, who had undertaken to choose an apartment for the *ménage*. There must be three bedrooms, he says. Two of them, he insists, must communicate; the third must be remote, separated from the others by one of the sitting-rooms. And when this much is told, there remains very little to tell until the gathering of the final storm.

Perhaps we are warranted in saying that the *liaison*, in its earlier years at all events, was happy because it had no history. The theory is borne out by Chopin's retrospective exclamation, after it was all over for ever, "Huit années d'une vie rangée!" There was no "Sturm und Drang," as in the Musset period. "Sturm und Drang" had played havoc with George Sand's emotions, and she was tired of them. The time had come, if it was ever to come, when she must fulfil her aspiration to "give her children a respectable mother." She did not quite fulfil it, as we shall see. But she came nearer to fulfilling it than she had ever come before; and Chopin was the man to help her. He had no taste for the extravagant excesses of Romanticism. He was an invalid, and the "*vie*

rangée" was a necessity for his health. He had had his honeymoon; and only asked to be allowed to settle down, and to be cosseted when he was ill.

As to the terms on which he and George Sand lived together, there has been much loud dispute and free interchange of recriminations. Chopin himself, indeed, being a gentleman, contributed nothing to the controversy; but his friends and admirers have spoken on his behalf. His life, they aver, though monogamous, did not lack pernicious excitement; they even go so far as to say that his life was shortened by his mistress's physical exactions.* And George Sand, on her part, published her defence against the charge even before it was preferred. Chopin, she declared, was not her lover but her patient—her "*malade ordinaire.*" She boasted of her self-abnegation in living with him "chastely, like a virgin." It may well be that both stories are true, relating to different periods of time; and we may be quite sure that, if George Sand's story had contained the whole truth, the ultimate estrangement would have been less embittered. Nurses and their patients do not quarrel quite as we shall presently see these two quarrelling.

For a long time, however—for the greater part of eight years, in fact—we find no trace of any shadow lying across the calm path of their happiness. They could not be married, since M. Dudevant still lived—and is even heard of in the Letters as sending his son Maurice six pots of jam as a New

* One may quote here the words of Dumas fils: "Madame Sand a de petites mains sans os, moelleuses, ouateuses, presque gelatineuses. C'est donc fatalement une curieuse excessive, trompée, déçue dans ses incessantes recherches, mais non une passionée. C'est en vain qu'elle voudrait l'être, elle ne peut pas; sa nature physique s'y refuse."

Year's present—but they behaved as if they were. The time was still remote when the concierge of the Paris apartment was to wait upon Chopin with complaints of the levity of George Sand's behaviour with her husband; and he comported himself very much as a second husband and a stepfather, regarding his relations as serious and permanent, entering merrily into the amusements of the children, and using his influence to impose a limit on the Bohemian rowdyism which had too long been *de règle* at Nohant. Such practical jokes as we have seen played on Mallefille were by no means to his taste, and he did his best to put them down. On that point we have the evidence of his pupil, Mademoiselle de Rozières, who came on a visit to the chateau.

"In the evening her brother [Hippolyte Châtiron] came to kick up a row. And what a row! Enough to split one's head open! I really thought he would have smashed the billiard-table. He flung the billiard balls about, he shouted, he danced round the room in hob-nailed boots. People only put up with him, as Madame Sand does, because they are not obliged to do so. If one were compelled to submit to it, it would be a torture. He is far from clean, and his conversation is vulgar. What a specimen of a Berry yokel! And nearly always drunk! I am told that the house was full of persons of that sort before the reign of Chopin began."

From Chopin's own letters, too, we gather that there were other matters in which he sided with the angels and with decorum. There is a very ugly story belonging to this period about a certain Augustine, described sometimes as Solange's cousin, and sometimes as George Sand's adopted daughter, who came to live at Nohant. It is alleged that she lived there in the character of Maurice's mistress, with his mother's

sanction and approbation, and that Chopin opposed the proceeding with all his power, though unsuccessfully. The story is only told in full in a letter written after the rupture; and it has been denounced, by M. Rocheblave and others, as a calumny on a good woman's reputation; but the many veiled allusions to it in earlier letters afford a strong presumption of its truth. It fits in, at any rate, with what we know of Chopin's strained relations with Maurice and of his solicitude for Solange.

Solange, according to George Sand, was the only member of the household who did not "spoil" Chopin. She seems even to have resented his affection for Solange on the ground that Solange did nothing to earn it. There is no doubt, certainly, that Solange was a naughty child, and troublesome —wilful, petulant, and idle. She had, in fact, to be sent to a boarding-school because she could not be managed at home. But even naughty children have their two soul-sides; and nothing is more clear than that Chopin was very fond of Solange, and liked her even to tease him and interrupt his work. He writes of her much as a father might of his own daughter, telling his sister that he has been obliged to leave a letter to her unfinished, in order to play duets with Solange, or to take her and the dog for a drive, or to help her cut down a tree in the garden, or to join her in feasting off chocolate creams. Evidently he was her special friend and confidant in the house, and he liked to be so treated and regarded. That part of the picture is pretty and idyllic, though the friendship for the daughter contained the germs of the dissolution of the attachment for the mother.

For the rest, artistic reunions and house-parties took the place of the boisterous Bohemianism which Chopin had always detested, and which George Sand herself was probably

beginning to outgrow. We get a trace of the old tone now and again—when we hear, for instance, of the drunken irruptions of Hippolyte, and when we read of the mistress of the house threatening to throw a bucket of water over the man-servant because he has been ringing the dinner-bell too noisily and too long—but not very often. The arts were not only cultivated, but enjoyed; for most of the visitors were masters of one or other of the arts.

There came, for instance, Delacroix, the painter—he in whose studio George Sand had once sat for hours, deploring the loss of Alfred de Musset's love, and who now loved Chopin as a brother. There came Liszt, who had at last escaped from his servitude to Madame d'Agoult, and was, for the moment, heart-whole. There came Madame Viardot, the singer, beloved of Turgueneff, sister of La Malibran, and of that old Manuel Garcia who died, a centenarian, only a few years ago. There came also Chopin's sister Louise, most devoted of sisters, and, as we have already seen, his not less devoted pupil, Mlle. de Rozières. And harmony—outward harmony at all events—prevailed. Sometimes the musicians played; sometimes the novelist read extracts from her latest pages. The vocalist sang to them on the terrace; the painter set up his easel in the park. Maurice Sand installed a theatre and organised amateur performances. Young men and maidens from the neighbourhood were invited to come and take part in them; and we hear of Chopin himself not only directing the orchestra, but "making up" as a Jew, a dowager, a sentimental old maid, and a phlegmatic Englishman.

On the surface all was well. For a season, perhaps, all was well beneath the surface too. It was an orderly life, in a sense, and yet sufficiently diversified. But though the

shadows took a long time falling, it was not long before sharp eyes foresaw them. One may surmise that there were reasons why the eyes of Mlle. de Rozières were sharper than another's. She writes as one who loved the Master, though she only presumed to express her love in worship. She may have been disposed, therefore, to imagine more than she actually observed. George Sand herself declared that her "lingering looks followed him without cessation, as if she would envelop him with love." But her testimony, for what it is worth, may be recorded.

"Chopin," she writes, "no longer looks like a ghost. He tries to compose, and we are all on the best of terms with each other. And yet what I told you the other day is true. Love is no longer there—on one side, at all events. There remain only tenderness and devotion, mingled, according to the day's mood, with regrets, and melancholy, and boredom, due to all sorts of causes, but especially to the clash of their characters, the divergence of their tastes, and the differences in their opinions. I can only say to him, 'Take care, you will never alter her ideas;' and other things of the kind. She sometimes speaks to him very sharply, and that cuts him to the heart. He, on his part, has his fancies, his vivacities, his antipathies, his exigencies; and he evidently has to give way because it is *she* who commands, and he has not the strength to resist."

And then again :—

"She is good, devoted, disinterested—one might conclude that she is the dupe of her goodness. Oh yes! she is very good indeed. He calls her his angel; but the angel has

large wings which sometimes knock against you and hurt you."

That is the pupil's deposition. We must next see how far it can be confirmed from Chopin's own narrative, and from other independent sources.

CHAPTER XXV

Reasons for not trusting George Sand's account of the "liaison" with Chopin : Liszt's summary of the situation : "Lucrezia Floriani" : Was "Prince Karol" meant for Chopin? : Extracts from Chopin's and George Sand's letters to Chopin's sister.

DECIDEDLY it is not to George Sand's "Histoire de ma Vie" that we must go for the veritable truth concerning her relations with Chopin. That work is a vague and sentimental retrospect. Like Rousseau's "Confessions," it confuses the things which happened with the things which, in the view of the writer, ought to have happened. The contemporary correspondence confutes it in a good many particulars; and the tone is that of a woman who, accused of having behaved badly, and desiring a reputation for "sensibility," and even for sanctity, makes out the best case for herself that she can, and finds that general statements serve her purpose better than particulars.

It was her habit, in her personal writings, to make self-justification the prelude to self-praise. Buloz himself drew her attention to the fault, and remonstrated, when she brought him the manuscript of "Elle et Lui"—the romance in which she told the story of her *liaison* with Musset. The public, he said, would find her too "severe." It would be more becoming if she were silent about her pecuniary relations with a man whom she had loved, and if she represented Thérèse—that is to say, herself—as "somewhat less perfect"; and he added: "A sort of *saintliness*, if I may so put it, is too frequently attributed to Thérèse."

No one who has compared "Elle et Lui" with the true story on which it is founded, and has, in particular, followed the Pagello interlude, can question the justice of this criticism;

and the criticism is also applicable, though not quite in the same degree, to the section of the Autobiography consecrated to Chopin. The great artist is handled with a sort of sentimental severity as a spoiled child who received many benefits but gave little in return for them. George Sand, we gather, had rescued Chopin from Parisian dissipations which were playing havoc with his health, and had had but a poor reward. Not only had she, for his sake, accepted the obligation of living "chastely like a virgin." In addition to that deprivation she complains that he "was not exclusive in the affections which he bestowed, though he expected exclusiveness in the affection which others felt for him," and that his society was of no help to her in the hours of her depression. Moreover, she says, she could never convert him to her own pure religion, whatever that may have been. He could not emancipate himself from the orthodox Catholic dogmas, and lived in terror not only of death but of damnation, so that she had to sit up with him night after night and chase the phantom of his ghostly enemy from his pillow. And even so, she gives us to understand, she would have borne with him, if he had not taken the part of Solange in a bitter family quarrel. But that was too much. It came to a quarrel, and the first quarrel was the last. They separated; and when, once afterwards, they met again, he turned his back on her.

That is the summary of the apologia; and the statement with which it concludes—though it has been embellished and become a legend—is, as we shall have occasion to see, a complete and deliberate untruth. The rest is, no doubt, in a way, founded upon fact; but there is very little foundation, and a vast deal of superstructure. Or perhaps it would be better to say that the superstructure is quite other than the foundation should have suggested. For, though the ethics of

such a *liaison* as this—a *liaison* so closely resembling a marriage —may be a little difficult to fix, it is clearly impossible to regard George Sand, in this instance, as the injured victim of "sensibility."

She got tired of Chopin—about that there is absolutely no room for doubt. It was her habit—one cannot say her misfortune, for she never recognised it or wept over it—to get tired of men ; and we may perhaps find the clue to the situation in one of the obiter dicta of Liszt, reported by Janka Wohl.

"Madame Sand," says Liszt, "caught her butterfly and tamed it in her box by giving it grass and flowers—this was the love period. Then she stuck her pin into it when it struggled—this was the *congé*, and it always came from her. Afterwards she vivisected it, stuffed it, and added it to her collection of heroes for novels. It was this traffic in souls which had given themselves up reservedly to her which eventually disgusted me with her friendship. . . . For all that, George Sand was really very good company ; and if one forgot she was a woman—a thing I rarely care to do—and if one closed one's eyes to her maternal proclivities—a funny term coined to express her own disenchantment—one could admire her, and even passionately attach oneself to her."

The "maternal proclivities" were certainly very much in evidence in George Sand's ultimate attitude towards Chopin ; and it is hardly less certain that she added him to her collection of heroes for novels. She denied, indeed, with sentimental vehemence, that Prince Karol in "Lucrezia Floriani" was meant for him, and she was able to indicate points of difference between his and Prince Karol's characters. But that proves nothing in face of the fact that Prince Karol was

identified as Chopin,* not only by his own friends, but also by the members of her own family, by whom, in fact, Chopin's attention was drawn to the resemblance. "My dear M. Chopin," wrote Solange, "have you read 'Lucrezia Floriani?' My mother has put you in it."

And the thesis of "Lucrezia Floriani" is that it is a nuisance for a woman of genius to be at the beck and call of an invalid. The hint was plain enough, though Chopin was too little suspicious to see it except under compulsion. One can hardly doubt that, having seen it, he would have taken it—that it would have been repeated, more and more broadly, until he did take it—if other circumstances had not precipitated the rupture. We shall come to that very soon; but we may pause first to turn over the newly recovered collection of his letters, and examine their record of the happy years before the catastrophic climax had begun to loom in view.

Tranquillity is the note of them—the tranquillity of an invalid who did not know how ill he was, but felt himself too weak for passion, for infidelity, or for jealousy. We seem to be centuries removed from the *épanchements* of the Romantic Movement; the impression is rather of an old friend of the family making a long sojourn in a country house. All verbal homage is paid to the conventions. The assumption is that the writer's sister and mother know nothing of the intimacy of his relations with his hostess. He even speaks of her as "my hostess," and as "the mistress of the house"—"*la châtelaine.*" For instance: "My hostess embraces you. You know how fond she is of you. She has written you a letter." One cannot extract any connected story from the documents;

* Turgueneff so identified him in a letter to Madame Viardot.

and they have no claim to a place among the letters which are also literature; but a few passages picked almost at random will have their use as a mirror of the man and of his life. The first passage is from a letter to his sister, written shortly after her visit to Nohant.

"I am sending you the little songs you heard one evening. Solange, who sends you a kiss (she has reminded me of it twice), has written the words out for you from memory; and I have written the music. I hope you arrived safely, and have had good news from Vienna and Cracow. . . .

"Last night I saw you all in a dream; and I hope this journey has done no harm to your health. Write me a line to say. For my own part, I have been idling during the last few days. Maurice is not yet here, but will return to-morrow or the day after. Remember what I told you when you left us—that I should return alone by the diligence, and that the post-chaise journey was only undertaken for the maintenance of certain *convenances*. To-day we are planning an excursion to Ars. My hostess's aunt is here with her ward, occupying your room, as I wrote to you when you were at Vienna."

We hear presently of the arrival of another visitor.

"We have been here more than a month. Madame Viardot came with us and stayed for three weeks. We are all very well, though the fever has been raging in the country all through the winter. The weather is now fine and favourable, but when we arrived there were terrible thunderstorms. . . . I was not made for country life, but still I enjoy the fresh air. I do not play much, for my piano is out of tune. I write

still less; that is why you have had nothing from me for so long."

Next we come to a piece of gossip—a story of Victor Hugo not contained in the famous biography written by "*un témoin de sa vie.*"

"M. Billard, an historical painter of no particular account, and a very ugly man, had a pretty wife whom M. Hugo had seduced. M. Billard caught them '*en flagrant délit*,' so that Hugo had to show his medal, proving that he was a Peer of France, to the Commissaire of Police, to avoid being arrested. M. Billard threatened to proceed against his wife, but was satisfied with a separation by mutual consent. Hugo had disappeared to travel for several months. Madame Hugo, very magnanimously, has taken Madame Billard under her protection, and Juliette, the actress of the Porte Saint Martin, notorious ten years ago, who has been living for a long time under the protection of M. Hugo—in spite of his wife, his children, and his poetry on the domestic affections—this Juliette, I say, has gone away with him. The evil tongues of Paris are satisfied. They have something to talk about; and there is no denying that the story is amusing—especially as Hugo now wears five decorations, and never loses an opportunity of posing as superior to all human weaknesses."

A note on an afternoon's excursion:—

"I have just returned from a drive with Solange, who shook me up nicely in her carriage, in the company of Jacques. Jacques is the name of a very large and well-bred dog, given to my hostess to take the place of the old Simon, who, this year, aged very much, and had one of his paws paralysed. When it rains, he jumps into the carriage, and stretches him-

self out in such a way that his head gets drenched at one of the carriage doors and his tail at the other. . . .

"My hostess is at this moment in the village with the dear doctor, her neighbour. They have gone to see a patient who, in spite of her fever, insists upon taking a journey of several leagues to consult a quack. There is no dissuading her."

A note on the illnesses that invade the family :—

"To-day everybody in the house has a cold in the head. That I should have an intolerable cough is not astonishing; but my hostess's cold is so bad and she has such a sore throat with it that she cannot leave her room, and her patience is exhausted.

"As a rule, the greater one's health the less one's patience where physical ailments are concerned; but that cannot be helped. Argument is of no avail. . . . To-day is a melancholy Christmas Eve, for the invalids will not have the doctor, though their colds are awful, and they have all gone to bed.

"Everybody abuses the climate of Paris, and forgets that in the winter the climate in the country is worse. Indeed, winter is winter wherever you are, and these two months are very difficult to get through. I often wonder how impatient people manage to live under skies still more inclement than ours. Sometimes I feel as if I would give several years of my life for an hour or two of sunshine. I have survived so many people stronger and younger than myself that I feel as if I were immortal."

One need quote no more. The letters relate nothing that at all intimately concerns this narrative. Save for the very occasional spice of scandal, they are trivial and almost child-like. One would say, indeed, that they are rather childish

than reserved—the letters of a man of genius to whom it is not given to express himself in print, and who very imperfectly realises anything in the world about him which is not connected with his art, and realises least of all that love is a kind of war, and that if "the beginnings are always happy," the end is apt to be disaster. Chopin appears in them as one who looks neither before nor after, assumes that things will always be as they have always been, treats incidents as incidental, expects no great events to spring from little causes, and is unmoved by the thought of the water always flowing under the bridge: a man, in fine, who did not cry out before he was hurt because he never dreamed that he was going to be hurt.

George Sand herself, during the period which the letters cover, was in correspondence with Chopin's sister, Louise. This is the "injuncted" correspondence, only procurable in Poland; and when one has read it and ruminated over it, one still fails to conjecture any sound reason, even from the Sand point of view, for its exclusion from France. It is only moderately intimate. It reveals no secrets, but is principally concerned with the weather and the state of Chopin's health. Once more the reader feels himself miles removed from the explosive passion of the earlier affairs. There are no confidences, no jealousies, none of the old aspirations after a moral pivot, none of the old lamentations over the "unarrangeableness" of life. It is a "*vie rangée*," a "*vie de ménage*," with a matron rather than a mistress at the head of it, that is depicted. For instance, in the letter inviting Louise to Nohant:—

"You will find my dear child rather poorly and much changed since you saw him last; but do not be too much alarmed about his health. It has not in a general way

deterioriated in the six years during which I have seen him every day. He has a bad fit of coughing every morning, and two or three crises, lasting two or three days only, every winter, with attacks of neuralgic pains from time to time. That is his ordinary state. For the rest, his lungs are sound, and his delicate constitution is not seriously impaired. I hope he will grow stronger in time; but I am sure that, if his habits are regular and he takes care of himself, he will live as long as other people. . . .

"For a long time he has only thought of the happiness of those whom he loves instead of his own happiness, which he can no longer share with them. For my own part, I have done everything in my power to mitigate the pain of this cruel absence, and though I have not succeeded in making him forget it, I have at least the consolation of having bestowed upon him and inspired in him as much affection as was possible in the circumstances. So come with him to see me, and believe that I love you in advance as a sister. I only beg you to make the little Chopin, as we call the great Chopin, your brother, take a good rest before he starts upon his journey."

And then, in letters written at various dates subsequent to the visit:—

"Frédéric is fairly well, although this March is very cold and very gloomy in comparison with the month of February, which was one of Nature's mistakes, so bright and cold was it. Now we are in the midst of hailstorms, clouds, and all the caprices of an uncertain and changeable climate. And yet your dear Fritz is not ill, and is always working, too hard in my opinion, at his lessons. To be without occupation does not suit his active and nervous disposition. Soon I shall

take him away from the pupils who idolise him, and carry him off to Nohant, where he must eat heavily, and sleep long, and compose a little."

"The weather is superb; the country is magnificent; and our dear child, I hope, is going to be as well as mine are, under the influence of the peaceful life and the beautiful sunshine."

"Your dear little brother has been very much exhausted by the severe winter which lasted so long here; but since the fine weather set in, he has quite recovered his health and youthfulness. A fortnight's warm weather does him more good than all the medicines in the world. His health is very dependent on the state of the atmosphere, so that I seriously think—supposing I can earn enough money this year to travel with my family—of taking him to the South for the three worst months of the next winter. If one could only shelter him from the cold for a whole year, he would then, with the summer to follow, have a clear eighteen months to get rid of his cough. I shall have to bully him to make him agree to it; for he loves Paris, whatever he may say. Not to deprive him of his Paris for too long, or take him away too long from his pupils, one might let him pass September, October, and November here, and return in March, and give him until the end of May before obliging him to return to Nohant. Those are my plans for this year and next. Do you approve of them?"

And so forth. For here again a few typical excerpts are sufficient, seeing that the interest of the letters lies in their tone, and not in any statements of fact which they contain. It is the maternal tone, which Liszt considered so significant,

though he could only attach his special significance to it in the light of subsequent events. There is no hint of any discord, or of any desire to be quit of a burden, though, at the date of the last of the letters, the end must have been almost in sight. One would say, if one knew nothing more of the story, that the burden was carried as a privilege, and that the "*vie rangée*," with its trivial round of duties and responsibilities, was all that George Sand desired.

Only, as it happens, one knows—and cannot help knowing—better. The portrait of Prince Karol is one piece of evidence, and the letters written in the period of recriminations furnish others. All sorts of little grievances and disagreements had paved the way for the final quarrel, of which the immediate occasion was the marriage of Solange Sand to Clésinger.

CHAPTER XXVI

Solange Sand at school : Her religious instruction : She jilts Fernand de Préaulx and marries Clésinger : Quarrel between Solange and her mother : Quarrels between Chopin and George Sand because he takes the part of Solange : Separation of Chopin and George Sand : Chopin's correspondence with Solange : The references to the rupture in his letters to his sister.

SOLANGE, as we have seen, was naughty and troublesome, and would not do as she was told. For that reason, as we have also seen, she was sent to a boarding-school, kept by a Madame Bascans, to whose husband George Sand wrote, requesting that her daughter should be given a very special kind of religious instruction.

"Religious ceremonies, I think, have a bad effect upon her. I am afraid they may destroy for ever that germ of enthusiasm which I have tried to implant in her for the mission and the teaching of Jesus, so strangely expounded in the Churches. I beg you, therefore, to keep her at home during the hours of service. But if you should be willing, as I requested you last year, to explain to her the philosophy of Christ, to make her feel the poetical beauty of the life and death of the Divine Man, to present the Gospel to her as the doctrine of equality, and to talk with her about the Gospels, so scandalously mutilated in the Catholic tradition, and so admirably rehabilitated in the 'Book of Humanity' of Pierre Leroux, that is the sort of religious instruction that I should like her to have in Holy Week and at all times. Only this teaching must be imparted to her by yourself, and not by any of the 'sacred comedians,' as the Hussites call them."

No doubt the programme was carried out; but it did not

succeed in making Solange docile and amenable. She wanted to have her own way, to choose her own husband—to make up her own mind and to change it as she pleased, with as little ceremony as her mother. Hence the troubles which date from September 1846—two years after her return to Nohant.

At that date a suitor presented himself—one Fernand de Préaulx, a country gentleman of Berry, "handsome and good," George Sand testifies, and four-and-twenty years of age. All seemed to be going well. "My daughter," George Sand wrote to her friend Poncy,* "is passionately in love with her tall and handsome cavalier. He is her slave, and only lives to please her." That was on January 7, 1847. But almost immediately afterwards there followed another letter to the same correspondent: "I am in trouble, in great trouble. Solange has refused to marry the man she loved. She has been inconsistent and a little *hard* about it." And that brings us to Clésinger.

Clésinger had been a non-commissioned officer in the Cuirassiers, and was now a sculptor. He had introduced himself to George Sand as an aspiring artist seeking the patronage and encouragement of an artist of established reputation. She who, at that date, regarded artists as the true priests of humanity, had answered his letter; early in 1847 she made his personal acquaintance, and called upon him in his studio, and it was arranged that he should make her bust and then that of Solange. He fell in love with Solange, and Solange with him, with the result that she gave M. Fernand de Préaulx his dismissal. As Chopin writes: "They all came to Paris on purpose to sign the marriage contract, and she refused her signature."

* A Socialist stonemason of Toulon with whom George Sand was for some time in correspondence.

That, save for the scandal, did not matter very much. "Better before marriage than afterwards," as Chopin wrote. But Clésinger was not, in George Sand's view, a satisfactory suitor. She made inquiries about him, and the information which she obtained was, she says, "bad enough to hang him." Solange, however, was too infatuated to be open to argument, and the ex-non-commissioned officer of Cuirassiers was ready for the rôle of Young Lochinvar. The lovers eloped, and their marriage was the only means of avoiding the gravest sort of scandal—a scandal which could only be hushed up on condition that the marriage was hurried on. George Sand accepted the inevitable, apparently with a good grace, in spite of her knowledge that her son-in-law was heavily in debt; and wrote on the subject to Poncy as follows :—

"In the course of six weeks she [Solange] had broken off a love affair which hardly affected her at all and entered upon another in which she is wrapped up heart and soul. She was on the point of marrying her former lover. She has given him his *congé*, and is marrying the other man instead. It is odd. Above all, it is rash. But, after all, she is within her rights, and destiny smiles upon her."

And then again :—

"My daughter Solange was married yesterday to a gallant man and a great artist, Jean-Baptiste Clésinger. She is happy. So are we all."

That was the situation when Clésinger and Solange set out for their honeymoon towards the end of May 1847. When they returned from it, they found that, though nothing had happened, things nevertheless had changed. George

Sand, after turning the matter over in her mind, had come to the conclusion not only that she did not like Clésinger, but that she could not endure him—that he was, in fact, a noisy and boisterous person, whose presence at Nohant, or in the neighbourhood, would be an intolerable nuisance to her. She told Solange as much when she came to see her; and Solange complained to Chopin :—

"I found her very much changed, cold as ice, and even hard. She began by saying that if I quarrelled with my husband I might return to Nohant, but that, as for him, she refused to keep up his acquaintance."

On that plea Chopin, on behalf of Solange, joined issue.

His feelings had already been hurt by neglect. While the marriage was in contemplation, George Sand had treated him as a stranger, neither asking his advice nor even confiding in him. She gives her reasons in a letter to their common friend, Gryzmala. Chopin's advice, she says, is not worth having.

"He has never been able to see things as they are, or to understand anything about human nature. His soul is all poetry and music, and he cannot endure anybody who is different from himself. Besides, the exercise of his influence in my family affairs would mean the loss of all dignity on my part and of all affection between my children and myself. Talk to him, and try to make him understand, in a general way, that he had better abstain from meddling."

She goes on to say that her love for Chopin has been "absolutely chaste and maternal," and that she has suffered "martyrdom," et cetera; but that, for the moment, is irrelevant. She also wrote to Chopin himself, who was at the

time in Paris, conveying an ultimatum. She would only have him at Nohant on condition that he did not talk about Solange; and he rejected the condition. It seemed better. "It was so long," he wrote, "since we had met without a battle and a scene"—which disposes of the allegation in the Autobiography that their first quarrel was also their last.

What follows belongs, perhaps, more properly to the life of Solange than to that of Chopin; but it is impossible to appreciate the situation without quoting from the letters written by Madame Clésinger to Chopin at this date. The first of them is written from La Châtre, immediately after the return from the honeymoon.

"I am ill. The journey in the Blois diligence will tire me terribly. Will you lend me your carriage to take me back to Paris? Answer *immediately*, please. I am awaiting your reply at La Châtre, where I am in great distress. I have left Nohant for ever, after the most frightful scenes with my mother. Please wait for me before you leave Paris. I am very anxious to see you at once. They have absolutely refused to let me have your carriage, so, if you are willing that I should use it, write me a line giving permission, and I will send to Nohant for it."

Chopin replied, placing his carriage at her disposition, and wrote to George Sand saying that he had done so. There quickly followed another letter complaining of further outrage.

"All the furniture has been taken out of my room. They have removed the curtains, the bed, and everything, and divided the room into two parts. One half of it is now an auditorium, and the other half is a stage. They play

comedies there. Léontine, Henry, and Duvernet were present at a performance. The dressing-room is their theatrical wardrobe, and the boudoir is the actors' green-room. Who would have believed it? A mother who sets up a theatre in the bridal chamber of her *darling daughter!*"

Chopin's answer is that of a peacemaker. He affects to believe that there has been "a first step towards reconciliation," and predicts that "time will do the rest." But the confidences which he receives continue to be in the same tone.

"I rather think all our belongings in Paris have been seized for debt. . . . One gets used to everything, even to anxiety. Here am I, with my extravagant tastes, who used to think a coach with six horses hardly good enough to carry me—I who used to live in an imaginary world, in dreams of poetry, amid clouds and flowers—here am I, living more prosaically than the most humdrum. I am sure I shall become a miser—I who once would have thrown millions out of the window. I have aged more in a week than in the previous eighteen years.

"On the one hand I have these anxieties about money, and on the other a mother who brusquely abandons me at a time when I know nothing whatever about life.

"I know now what is the value of a friend, especially when he is the only one I have. My mother, the first and best friend that Providence gave me, leaves me to the care of the saints of Paradise, without even knowing whether any one of them is willing to afford me protection."

And still Chopin tried to act as peacemaker; and did so in circumstances which once more prove the inexactitude of the "Histoire de ma Vie."

All the world knows George Sand's story, already referred to, of her one meeting with him after the breach—how she cooed "Frédéric" at him, and how he turned his back on her, whether because he bore malice, or because he could not trust himself to speak. But he did speak, as we know from his letter written, on the following morning, to Solange, and first printed by M. Rocheblave in his "George Sand et sa fille." He says:—

"Yesterday I called on Madame Marliani, and as I was leaving I met your mother, who was entering with Lambert, at the door. I said good-morning to your mother, and my next words were to ask her if it was long since she had heard from you. 'A week,' she replied. 'You didn't hear yesterday or the day before?' 'No.' 'Then I can inform you that you are a grandmother. Solange has a little daughter, and I am very happy to be the first to give you the news.' I bowed and went downstairs. Combes, the Abyssinian traveller, was with me, and as I had forgotten to say that you were well—an important item—I begged Combes to go up again, since I am bad at climbing stairs myself, and say that you and the child were both doing nicely. I was waiting for the Abyssinian down below, and your mother accompanied him downstairs and questioned me with much interest about your health. I told her that you had, with your own hands, written a line to me in pencil, on the morning after your child's birth, that you had suffered a great deal, but that the sight of your little one had caused you to forget all your suffering. She asked me if your husband was with you, and I replied that I thought the address of your note was in his handwriting. She asked me how I was. I answered that I was pretty well, and then I asked the concierge to open the

door for me. I bowed, and presently found myself, led by the Abyssinian, in the Square d'Orléans."

It seems actually to have been as the result of this interview that the reconciliation was brought about. A day or two afterwards we find Chopin writing: "I am very glad to hear about the kind letters which you have received from your mother." But it was only the mother and daughter who were thus reconciled. Though Chopin had brought them together, his personal relations to them remained unaltered. Solange continued to complain to him as often as there was a renewal of estrangement, and even begged him to renew his kind offices as their intermediary—especially at the time of her child's death.

"I daresay what I write to you will be of no avail. She will not stir. If she loved me ever so little, she would be with me already. My God! How can she treat me with so little tenderness? I who have had a daughter and lost her, though so young, cannot understand her. It is such a cruel and terrible thing to be a mother no longer. Ah! she knows nothing about that. But God preserve her—she may know it soon."

This time, however, Chopin could not intervene. He responded, indeed, to an appeal to give good advice to Clésinger, who received it respectfully, if he did not follow it; but he no longer met George Sand, and was hardening his heart against her. He was ill, and doubtless missed the comforts of home-life; and his letters to his family reproduce his bitterness in *crescendo* tones. Even before the final parting, we find malicious references to the "cousin," Augustine who "reckons upon Maurice because he profits from her

favours." Then we find the recitation of Solange's grievances transmitted to Poland. Then we read that "one would think that her idea was to get rid of her daughter and myself at the same time because she found us a nuisance," and that she cannot endure to have either Solange or himself near her because they are "the mirror of her own conscience"; and then :—

"That is why she has not written a line to me; that is why she will not come to Paris this winter. . . . I do not regret having helped her to endure the eight most delicate years of her life—those in which she was bringing up her son. I do not regret what I have suffered. But I do regret that her daughter, that plant so carefully tended, and shielded from so many storms, has been broken in her mother's hands with an imprudence and a levity which one might excuse in a woman of twenty, but not in a woman of forty."

And then :—

"It has been said that she is writing her Memoirs; but in a letter to Madame Marliani Madame Sand writes that the work will not be what is commonly understood by Memoirs, but rather her reflections on art, literature, etc. Indeed, it is too early for the other thing. The dear Madame Sand will have many more adventures in her life before she grows old; many things, both beautiful and ugly, will still happen to her."

And then :—

"She no longer writes to me, and I no longer write to her. She has given instructions to her landlord to let her apartment in Paris. Sol writes to me that she is with her father Dudevant in Gascony. Her husband is here finishing

his marbles for the Exhibition which will take place in March. They have no money, so it is better that Sol should pass the winter in a good climate. But the poor child is bored. *A pretty honeymoon that!* In the meantime the mother writes beautiful serials for the *Débats*. She gets up private theatricals in the country in her daughter's nuptial chamber; she forgets her troubles, and dazes herself as best she can, and will not rouse herself until she feels her heart aching—that heart over which her head at presents prevails. I have borne my cross in the matter. God help her if she cannot distinguish true attachment from flattery! Her friends and neighbours have long been able to comprehend her proceedings. Indeed, no one will ever be able to keep pace with a soul so capricious. Eight years of a regular life were too much for her. God has granted that these years were those in which her children were growing up. If it had not been for me, her children would long ago have left her for their father; and Maurice is likely to go and join his father at the first good opportunity. Perhaps those conditions are essential to her talent and her happiness. But do not be distressed about it. Already it seems a long time ago, and Time is a great physician, though I have not yet quite recovered."

And finally there is the full relation of the ugly story of Augustine—"the dirty story of which all Paris is talking." Maurice would not marry her. Maurice will never marry except for money. But he "wanted to have a pretty cousin in the house," and was accommodated; and then the pretty cousin was married to the first husband who could be found for her. Her father has printed and circulated pamphlets setting forth her wrongs.

"It is an unworthy act on his part, but the story is true. That is the act of benevolence which she said she would accomplish, and which I opposed as strongly as I could when the girl was brought to the house. . . . She was dressed like Sol, and better cared for, because Maurice insisted. When her parents wanted her home again, they would not let her go because Maurice objected. . . . The mother was embarrassed by the daughter who, unfortunately, saw all that was going on. Hence lies, shame, further embarrassment, and all the rest of it."

That is the note on which the letters quit the subject. In the rest of the correspondence George Sand's name is not even mentioned.

CHAPTER XXVII

Chopin's concert tour in England : His return to Paris : His last illness : George Sand refused admission to his apartment : His death.

AT the time when he parted from George Sand, Chopin, though he probably did not know it, was already a dying man. One cannot say, indeed, exactly at what date the seeds of consumption were sown in his delicate constitution, for medical diagnosis was much less certain and scientific in those days than it is in these ; but the malady was at that time well advanced and making rapid strides. It was as a dying man that he undertook his great concert tour in England, uttering his swan song in a blaze of glory.

He was received with enthusiasm ; his triumph was social as well as professional. Lord Falmouth lent him his house for one of his concerts. He was invited everywhere, and met everybody : Queen Victoria, Prince Albert, the Crown Prince of Prussia, the Duke of Wellington, the Duchess of Sutherland, the Duchess of Argyll, Lady Granville, Lady Cadogan, Lady Lansdowne, and Lady Byron ; Lady Norton, Lady Blessington, and Count D'Orsay ; Carlyle, Rogers, and Dickens ; Mrs. Grote, and Monckton Milnes, and Jenny Lind. He and Jenny Lind spent a whole morning of four hours together at the piano.

Presently his pupil, Miss Sterling, carried him off to Scotland, and he exclaimed, "What delightful people these Scotswomen are ! I cannot express a wish for anything without immediately getting it. They even bring me the French papers every day." His friends, moreover, pressed him to winter in England, in spite of the climate ; and for a moment he hesitated.

"I should prefer something else, but really I don't know what. In October I shall see and shall act according to the state of my health and my purse. Another hundred guineas in my pocket would not hurt me. If London were not so gloomy, and if the people were not so dull and heavy, and if there were not this smell of coal, and these fogs, I would sit down and learn English. But the English are so different from the French, to whom I have attached myself as to my own countrymen. . . . If I were younger, I would turn myself into a machine, and give concerts everywhere, and play the most absurd things, provided that I got well paid for it. But it is difficult to turn myself into a machine at my time of life."

Probably the stay in England did hasten the end, and certainly England was no place for him. In England music is a luxury, whereas elsewhere it is an art. So Chopin noted when he made up his mind to go. Only to a few choice spirits could he ever be more than a popular entertainer. Yet he can hardly have been unhappy here; for he lived with the few to whom he was an artist—perhaps the greatest of artists—and from whom he received an affectionate and reverent adoration. There is no better testimony to the lovableness of Chopin's character than the way in which his pupils, both men and women, English, and French, and Polish, rallied to him when he needed them at the last.

When he returned to Paris in January 1849, his state was pitiable. We read of him as "a painful spectacle, the picture of exhaustion, the back bent, head bowed—but always amiable and full of distinction." He was no longer strong enough to give lessons, and the money that he had saved was quickly spent. There are depths of pathos in his last letter to his sister.

"Come to me, if you can. I am ill, and no doctor can do me as much good as you. If you have no money, borrow it. When I am better, I shall earn some easily, and will repay whoever has lent it to you; but now I am too hard up to send you anything. My apartment is large enough to take you in even if you bring your two children with you. . . . I do not myself know why I am anxious to have Louise with me. It is like the whim of a woman with child. I do hope the family will let her come. Who knows if I shall not bring her back with me when I am cured? . . . Madame Obreskow, who has been so kind as to write to her (I gave her Louise's address), will perhaps persuade her better than I can. Mlle. de Rozières, too, will add a word in support of my plea; and Cochet, if he were here, would also speak for me, for no doubt he would see that I have got no better. Æsculapius has not turned up for the last ten days, having at last perceived that my condition is beyond any help that his science can give. . . . So busy yourself in procuring a passport and some money, and make haste. You know that the cypresses have their caprices, and my caprice to-day is to have you with me. . . . Your brother, devoted to you but very weak,

CHOPIN."

Louise obeyed the summons, and arrived in time; for it was June when her brother sent for her, and he was to live until October; and she found several other devoted friends gathered round him, doing what they could. Madame Obreskow had made a secret arrangement with his landlord to pay half his rent. She was a Russian helping a Pole, but the sympathies of artists are stronger than racial enmities. Princess Marceline Czartoryska sat by his bedside, like a sister of charity, and nursed him. Madame Rubio, another pupil,

knowing his necessities, wrote to Miss Sterling; and she and some other Scottish and English friends subscribed no less a sum than £1000 and sent it for his relief. The envelope containing the bank-notes was placed surreptitiously on his mantelpiece, so that he might not know to whom he owed the obligation, and narrowly escaped being thrown into the fire by mistake.

Other friends and pupils who were with him in his last hours were Gutmann, and Gavard, and Countess Delphine Potocka, who hurried all the way from Nice, and whom he asked to sing to him while he lay dying, and, of course, Solange, and Franchomme, and Fontana—the same Fontana to whom he had written happy letters from Majorca, and whose help he had sought when he was looking for an apartment with "two communicating bedrooms." "I have never cursed any one," he said to Fontana now; "but life has grown so intolerable that I think it would help me to die more easily if I were to curse 'Lucrezia.'" For he knew now what "Lucrezia" meant, and why it had been written; and, knowing, he was sick, not only of consumption, but of "the fever called living" too.

And George Sand?

Well, George Sand, just then, had many other things to think of besides Chopin's illness. The storm started by the Revolution of 1848 was still raging. The Republic which succeeded the Orleanist monarchy was struggling along under difficulties, and she was a Republican who took herself very seriously. She had offered her pen to the cause, and the offer had been accepted. She had been acting as secretary to Ledru Rollin, and drafting official manifestoes, and expounding her views on political philosophy in the high-class magazines. She had been giving advice to everybody, from Lamartine to her son Maurice, who had been elected Mayor

of Nohant. "You are not a fanatic," she wrote to the former, "and you ought to be—you to whom God speaks on Sinai." And to the latter: "We have plenty of wine this year, so you had better invite the National Guard into the kitchen, regale them for an hour or two in moderation, talk to them, and illuminate their darkness."

That to begin with, in the first heat of enthusiasm. Afterwards there had come unexpected disappointments, and gradual disillusion: the discovery that the bulk of the French people were only bourgeois after all, that Lamartine was vain and weak, and that Ledru Rollin was anything but a man of action, and the consequent inclination to accept, on terms, the Bonapartist solution of the crisis. All these things kept her thoughts as well as her pen busy. Decidedly there was no lack of occupation to cause her thoughts to dwell upon Chopin.

They did not dwell upon him, but at last they turned to him. In September, just a month before his death, she wrote to Louise:—

"DEAR LOUISE,—I did not know, but have just heard, that you are in Paris. I shall be able at last to hear from you the truth about Frédéric. Some tell me that he is much more ill than usual; others that he is only weak and indisposed, as I have always known him to be. I venture to ask you to write me a line, for one can be misunderstood and abandoned by one's children without ceasing to love them. Believe me, I have never passed a day of my life since first I knew you, without thinking of you and cherishing your memory. It may be that you no longer have a place for me in your heart, but I do not think I have deserved all that I have suffered."

We do not know how Louise replied to this. What we do know is that George Sand said to Franchomme, "He shall never die in any arms but mine," and that she knocked at Chopin's door, and was turned away from it.

Naturally—and perhaps one may say rightly and properly—whether it was the dying man himself, or his friends on his behalf, who thus refused her admission. On his side pride was at stake, and on hers only the vanity of sentiment. He would not have her pity after he had lost her love; to have been pitied by the woman who had so wounded his heart would have been terrible. And hardly less shocking, since his heart still felt the wound, would have been those pretences of maternal love which, as Liszt insisted, were the invariable aftermath of her amours. There had never been between him and any of those who watched by his pillow such an intimacy of affection as had once subsisted between him and her. But they at least were sincere, and unconcerned with their own sentimental reputations; whereas George Sand desired a death-bed scene as the crown and climax of a sentimental legend. Such make-believe would have been ghastly at such an hour.

So the temptation—and, in spite of his speech about cursing "Lucrezia," one can hardly doubt that Chopin felt the temptation—was resisted; and George Sand was excluded from the death-chamber, and left to build her sentimental legend as best she could without the help of that final false pretence.

The end, when that happened, was already very near; "the fever called living" to which the wound in his heart had brought his life had nearly burnt itself out. For two days Chopin lay helpless, speechless, almost unconscious, hovering on the border-line between life and death. It was three o'clock in the morning of Wednesday, October 17,

when the doctor who was watching in the room, bent over him, letting the light of the candle fall upon his face, and asked him whether he was suffering much.

"Not any longer," he faintly whispered; and so the fever left him.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The importance of George Sand's novels : Her relation to the Romantic Movement.

THE end of the Chopin episode may give the biographer a breathing space, and an opportunity of saying, without appearing to digress, the little that there is room to say in a work of this character about George Sand's contributions to the treasure-house of literature.

It seemed perilous to interrupt the narrative for the purpose at any previous point. The books rained in too continuous a shower ; and if one had once begun reviewing them one would have been perpetually embarrassed by the sensation that here was a fresh parcel of them waiting to be reviewed. Moreover, the writer's life appeared always the more interesting theme of the two to follow. The excitement of that drama, however, necessarily flags with advancing years, while the literary interest remains. The books, indeed, are much too numerous to be analysed in detail even under those easier conditions ; but the attempt may be made to measure their collective significance and force.

The usual method of the French critics is to begin with the general statement that George Sand is one of the glories of French literature, and then to demonstrate in detail that she is not. It sounds parodoxical, but the paradox is broadly speaking true. She is—and she is not ; she is not—and yet she is. And one might, if one chose, follow up the paradox with another, saying that her worst books are her best and that her best books are her worst—and also that she was a great writer who never succeeded in writing a great book.

Decidedly only the critics who use the word "masterpiece" loosely would apply it to any of her works ; decidedly

she wrote no book of which one can confidently say that it would have "counted" even if she had never written anything else—nothing that stands out definitely above the ruck of books as do, in their several "genres," "Monte Cristo" and "Les Misérables" and "Père Goriot" and "Madame Bovary." One does not need to go through the list of them to prove that statement. They have all been widely read, and have had their chance; and it is not among the works of popular writers that one searches diligently for examples of neglected merit. The judgment that has been given against them cannot have been given by default; their claim has not only been preferred but weighed—and by more than one generation. In a list of great literary names the name of George Sand may figure; but "Lélia" does not figure in any list of great books, nor does "Indiana" nor "Jacques" nor "Consuelo" nor "La petite Fadette," nor any other that may be selected from the catalogue.

Many reasons might be given for this failure of her books to pass the highest standards. One reason may certainly be found in their lack of finish. They are not "embalmed in style," but are written in "ce style coulant cher aux bourgeois"; and work so written ages rapidly. Another reason may lie in George Sand's inability—especially when swayed by emotion or bitten by ambition—to realise the life about her. Among the peasantry of Berry, indeed, she seems as much at home, in spite of her tendency to idealise, as Miss Wilkins among the provincial people of New England. But her preference is for the great passions and the advanced ideas; and these, whether they be amorous, religious, or humanitarian, sweep her into strange waters, where landmarks cease to be distinct and visible. Her power of accurate observation is lost; the individual withers before

her gaze; apart from the emotion or the idea, she only sees "men as trees walking."

Even her theses, of course, lose in interest through this vagueness; for it means the ignoring of the circumstances on which, in actual life, the solution of the problems which she raises would depend. But her stories, viewed as works of art, suffer still more. We cannot, in practice, separate our interest in emotions from our interest in individuals; and, in George Sand, an individual is too often only the embodiment of an emotion, or the mouthpiece of a doctrine. Her minor characters may occasionally be characters in the full sense of the word; her major personages are hardly ever so. She typifies the individual, and does not individualise the type. We should not recognise any of her people if we met them in the street, as we should recognise Bouvard, or Pécuchet; we do not refer to any of them, feeling that we know them, as we refer to D'Artagnan or Lucien de Rubempré. It is a grave limitation, and has done much to help her books to be forgotten.

And yet the books do count—and at their psychological moment counted for a good deal—having, as it were, a certain cumulative effect as the vehement expression of a temperament, and the reiterated delivery of a message to which the age was just beginning to be prepared to listen. Their author had her very definite function to fulfil in the warfare waged by the leaders of the Romantic Movement.

On its literary side the Romantic Movement was a revolt against the classical conventions; and George Sand had not, consciously and deliberately at all events, very much to do with that. But it was also, to some extent, a battle for political and social liberty; and when those issues were

at stake George Sand fought in the forefront of the fray. She was a Republican, a Socialist, perhaps even a Communist; but in particular she fought for what she conceived to be the rights of her sex, and for what one may style their sentimental emancipation.

All the Romantic leaders were more or less anarchists in sexual matters. The love stories of the Romantic Movement form an interesting chapter in sentimental as well as literary annals. Victor Hugo, as Chopin has told us, took a lady of light morals from the boards of the Porte Saint-Martin, and established her as his mistress and his Muse. Sainte-Beuve made love to Hugo's wife, and boasted of her favours in disgraceful verse. Liszt, as we have seen, was carried off to Italy and Geneva by Madame d'Agoult. Alfred de Vigny, in spite of his mother's warning that the company of actresses was worse than that of prostitutes, fell a victim to the fascinations of Marie Dorval, who was soon unfaithful to him, preferring her lovers to be "*rigolo.*" Free love, that is to say, was in the air even before the Saint-Simonians made a cult of it.

The men, however, naturally looked at free love from a man's point of view, which is pretty much the same in all the ages. They had Don Juan for their prototype, and were rather libertines than preachers of a new sexual gospel. One can even picture them saying of their mistresses—and of each other's mistresses—what Cato said of the prostitutes of Rome, "Behold the protectors of our wives and daughters!" But George Sand spoke on behalf of the wives and daughters, claiming that they too should be freed from the tyranny of convention and prescription, and that, for them too, love should be the only law-giver. Just as her life illustrated this side of the Romantic Movement in

practice, so her early stories expounded it in theory, deducing the conclusions from the premisses with an unflinching logic.

Her minor premiss was supplied by her own unfortunate experience of married life, and by her discovery that her own heart was fickle even in intrigue. Her major premiss came to her from Rousseau through Madame de Staël. Like them, she "posited" that love was a divine instinct and the act of loving a virtue. Like Madame de Staël—for Rousseau's love affairs were more imaginary than real—she "felt good" even when she behaved badly, and even when she made herself ridiculous. It is the same with the heroes and heroines of "Lélia" and "Jacques" and the other novels of that group. Not only their irregularities, but also their infidelities appear as acts of compliance with the Divine Harmony and obedience to the Higher Law. The Jesuitical maxim that "the end sanctifies the means" is, in effect, transferred from clerical to amorous affairs. And George Sand has, in her studies, so isolated the phenomenon of which she treats that love appears not as "three parts of life" but as the whole of it. To love is the unique occupation of her characters. They have no trade or profession, and no other interest than that. When they cease to be in love, they feel that it is time for them to die.

One might, of course, attack the premisses. M. Jules Lemaître lately did so, vigorously and effectively, in an essay on "La nouvelle Héloïse," pointing out that love, so far from necessarily inspiring virtuous conduct, may also, as the newspapers daily show us, be the motive of crime. But let that pass. It is just as profitable to take the syllogism as it stands, and observe the conclusions to which George Sand suffers herself to be led by it. Here is our starting-point:—

"The immense superiority of this sentiment over all others—the proof of its Divine origin—is that it does not originate as an act of human will, and that man, unaided, is powerless to direct it. He cannot bestow it, and he cannot recall it, by an act of volition; but the human heart receives it from on high, no doubt for the purpose of conferring it upon the creature chosen for him by the designs of Providence; and when a soul of strength and energy has received it, it is in vain that human considerations raise their voices for its destruction. Its existence is self-sufficient and independent."

That is the generalisation. A few lines farther on, we find it particularised, for the benefit of a pair of lovers who are not, as the world would say, "free":—

"Had not Supreme Providence, which, in spite of man, is omnipresent, presided over this union? Each of the lovers was necessary to the other: Benedict to Valentine, that he might teach her the emotions without which life is incomplete; Valentine to Benedict, that she might import peace and consolation into a stormy and tormented life. But between them stood Society, treating their choice as absurd, guilty, and impious. Providence created the admirable order of nature; men have destroyed it. Which is to be held to blame?"

So much for the happy beginnings of illicit love; and it seems that Providence is still there when love takes wings and prepares to fly away. This is Jacques' pronunciamiento on the subject:—

"I have never teased my imagination either to kindle in my breast the sentiment which I could not find there or to

revive the sentiment which had become extinct. Nor have I ever imposed constancy upon myself as a duty. When I have felt my love failing, I have admitted the fact without shame, and without remorse, and have obeyed the Providence which attracted me elsewhere."

In these passages we find the sanction of the common saying, already quoted in this work, that "in George Sand, when a woman wishes to change her lover, God is always there to facilitate the transfer." It follows, as a matter of course, that the transfer has its solemn ritual. Jacques' wife, Fernande, has forsaken him for Octave :—

"Oh, my dear Octave," she exclaimed to her lover, "we will never pass the night together without first kneeling down and praying for Jacques."

The whole argument, if one may call it so, of George Sand's early romances is in these passages. Perhaps the *reductio ad absurdum* of the argument is in them too. Certainly it shocks one's sense of humour—to look at the matter from no higher point of view than that—to find the Christian God represented as the tutelary deity of the adulterers, and the suggestion put forward that those who are about to profane the marriage tie should open their proceedings with prayer for those whom they despitefully use. It is a proposal which seems even to pass the limits of farcical extravaganza.

None the less, it was made seriously, and has been taken seriously, even by readers whose sound moral preconceptions forbade them to take it literally. It has appealed, for instance, to George Sand's English critic and admirer, Miss Bertha Thomas, who appears to find in such passages a

high allegorical significance, who has persuaded herself that George Sand's "ideal of marriage was a high one," and who insists that "the alleged hostility of her romances to marriage resumes itself into a declared hostility to the conventional French system of match-making."

It is not, indeed, very easy to see how the text is to stand the interpretation which British respectability thus aspires to put upon it. Certainly nothing that we know of George Sand's life favours Miss Thomas' gloss. But the important thing is not that Miss Thomas has offered an inconclusive apology for George Sand's expression of her views, but that she has been moved by them instead of being shocked. For if they have thus moved her, one can understand how much more they must have moved thousands of others—and especially of the women, unhappily married, who indulged in day-dreams of what might have been. Those women and the young men who sighed for them formed the audience specially addressed. They took what they wanted from the novels, and ignored the rest, finding in them, as it were, a manual of devotion which helped them to "feel good" while toying with forbidden fruit—a marriage service for use when eloping with a neighbour's wife—an *Imitatio Magdalenæ* or *Samaritanæ*.

Little of it was really new. Most of it had been written before by Jean-Jacques in "La nouvelle Héloïse." But it seemed new because it was modern, because it was explicit, and because it was written from the woman's point of view. It was, in fact, the first emphatic presentment of the woman's point of view in literature; and though it is very obviously the point of view of a woman who had the blood of many light o' loves coursing in her veins, that is why we are bound to admit that the books count even if we find them unread-

able. In them, for the first time, the "feminine note in literature" sounded loud enough for the world to hear. They may be bad, but they are unique.

That is the inwardness of our paradox—that George Sand's worst books are also her best. Her later writings are superior to them from many points of view. They are more mature and workmanlike; their description and observation are both better. But they are not unique; they are less individual. The feminine note is still there, but it grows less personal; and though some of the idyllic pictures of the later periods are delightful, they still fall short of that supreme merit which one demands before one admits that one is in the presence of a masterpiece destined to survive.

And this for various reasons. One reason is that George Sand was the child of her period, and outlived it. She had not, like Victor Hugo, a humanitarian gospel to deliver which was absolutely independent of the circumstances of the thirties. Consequently she was thrown back, more and more, upon her technical skill as a story-teller; and that did not suffice to give her the highest place. Another reason is that she worked too hard, and tried to serve God and Mammon. It seemed to her that she might, at one and the same time, proclaim the philosophic and artistic truth and "make copy for Buloz." But that could not be; and she fell between two stools, as many another has done before and after her.

Moreover, the history of George Sand's intellectual development is largely the history of the development of a voice into an echo—of a teacher into a disciple. The severance from Musset, in fact, is the turning-point in her career. He influenced her very little—though his friends expressed the fear that he would "leave his genius in that woman's bed"—and Sandeau and Mérimée had influenced

her still less. After Musset had left her, however, she felt that she needed not only a lover but also a moral support. She found both, for a season, as we have seen, in Michel de Bourges; and thereafter she underwent many influences, each of which in turn is mirrored in her writings. She became the *porte-parole* first of Michel, and then of Lamennais, of Pierre Leroux, and others.

We need not stop to examine and discuss those influences in detail. On the whole, they probably were influences for good, though not the best to which she could have submitted. One is not called upon to prove, for instance, that the teaching of "Paroles d'un Croyant" is both morally and intellectually on a higher plane than the teaching of "Lélia" and "Jacques." The important thing is that the teaching is Lamennais' (or Leroux's or Michel's) and not hers. She soaked it in with the ready receptivity of a student preparing for an examination; she poured it out again with the fluency of a counsel speaking from a brief. She even passed it on, before she had thought it out and absorbed it, in her letters to her boy at school. Clever books, no doubt, can be written in that superficial fashion; but the foundations of the literature that is to last must be laid more deeply.

The conclusion seems clear. As a thinker George Sand was shallow and second-hand—an Æolian harp that made music of a sort when blown upon by any wind of doctrine. She takes the pose of an evangelist when, in reality, she is no more than a *vulgarisatrice*. She is most interesting—because she is most original—when she feels for herself, and does not stop to think at all. And to say that is to say, at the end, what we said at the beginning—that the real literary landmarks in her life are the novels of the "Jacques" and "Lélia" group. They, at least, strike a new note, a

feminine note, and an individual note. They are the expression of a temperament at once typical and unique; and though they leave the modern reader cold, or even give him cause to smile, they had a real influence on the generation to which they were addressed.

CHAPTER XXIX

End of George Sand's sentimental life : Manceau "the last link in the chain" : The affairs of Solange : Her quarrels with her husband : Her separation from him : Solange in Paris : Her correspondence with George Sand.

We may take it that George Sand's romantic life ended on the day on which Chopin's friends refused to admit her to his room, and she learnt the vanity of her vow that he should not die in any arms but hers.

She was forty-five and a grandmother. She had lost her beauty, and was becoming fat ; a very few years later we find Edmond de Goncourt, in his Diary, describing her face as "mummified," and Matthew Arnold doubting whether it was worth while "to go so far to meet such a fat old Muse." Her manner even began to acquire a certain stupefaction, due, no doubt, to overwork; she had domestic anxieties to worry her. So she essayed no more romantic enterprises, but rested from her labours, if not thankfully, at least contentedly. Her heart was a cemetery ; but there were no more crosses to be set up in it, though she had still twenty-seven years to live. It will be possible, therefore, to pass over this last period rapidly and lightly.

The only name which it is imperative to mention is that of Manceau. He was an engraver in bad health who lived in George Sand's house for many years—a factotum filling indefinite functions—and M. le Roy writes of him, in "George Sand et ces amis," as "the last link in the chain in which the first link was Aurélien de Sèze." She lamented him, when he died in 1865, as one who had been something more than a servant, writing of herself as "now at last left quite alone," and adding :—

"I do not regard him as unhappy in the region in which he dwells; but that image of himself which he has left with me, and which is only like a reflection in a mirror, seems to be complaining that it can no longer speak to me."

That, however, proves nothing; and there is no other proof. We have no right to say that the refined artisan was attached to the chain by any stronger rivet than the aristocratic lawyer of Bordeaux. The end of the series of experiences, we may reasonably conjecture, was not less calm than the beginning; though between the beginning and the end there had intervened the many passionate passages of which we have had to speak at length. We may resume the narrative without further reference to Manceau.

In 1849, indeed, and in the early fifties, George Sand was much more occupied with her daughter's affairs than with her own. It was well that Chopin had made the peace between them, for Solange had need of her mother. The marriage on which she had insisted was a failure—not only for pecuniary reasons—and it was not long before incompatibilities of temper declared themselves. Clésinger, though an artist, was a vulgarian. Solange had an active, restless mind, incapable of concentration, and very capable of being bored. We soon find her protesting angrily her right to a happiness which she does not enjoy.

"You tell me that youth is the period in which one's personality asserts itself. Certainly; you are quite right. In the first place because [a line is missing here], save in exceptional cases, age is the time when one is dull and egoistical. And, in the second place, *jeunesse oblige*. I mean that it is absolutely necessary that one should be happy when one is young. When *is* one to be happy if not then?

Happiness! I regard it as the most sacred right of youth. Duty? It is a fine word that means nothing. Virtue? It is a deception."

Complaints of Clésinger quickly followed. He "is a madman if ever there was one." Solange wants a separation, and to have the custody of her child. The little one must not be allowed to grow up under the influence of "a man so coarse and cynical"—a man who "respects nothing in the world." But then it appears that Clésinger also has his grievances. Having grounds for suspicion, he bursts unexpectedly into his wife's bedroom to look for evidence to confirm it. He finds love letters—not in his handwriting—carries them off, and hands them to his lawyer, to be used as *pièces justificatives* putting him in the right in the pending litigation.

That is the beginning of a long story, only indirectly relevant to the present work. Husband and wife communicated only through the medium of their solicitors, and prosecuted each other with the utmost rigour of the law. Disputes about the custody of the child were complicated with disputes about the dowry. The litigants threatened o seize each other's furniture and to sell each other up. It was an intricate and sordid, as well as a violent, quarrel. Happily we are only concerned with it in so far as it affected George Sand.

At first we find her advising Solange to seek peace of mind in literary work. The *ennui* of which Solange complains may, she says, be conquered in that way. Solange retorts effectively with a quotation from her mother's own "Lettres d'un Voyageur": "*Ennui* is a languor of the soul, an intellectual want of tone, which follows in the train of

great emotions or great desires. Neither *work* nor pleasure is a sufficient distraction from it." But George Sand returns to the charge. Let Solange try her hand at composition, and send what she writes to Nohant for correction. She will not merely tell her that it is good, or bad, but will show her exactly what is wrong with it. And she adds, drawing on her own reminiscences :—

"Youth is undoubtedly an age of suffering. One cannot persuade oneself that certain dreams are nothing more than dreams; and if you rack your brains over the matter as I did at your age, you will never have finished. I can truly say that I never began to live until the day on which I began to work for my living."

No doubt one reason why this advice was given, and reiterated, as we find it reiterated at intervals throughout many years, was that Solange often had to ask her mother for money ; but the reasons alleged may also be assumed to have been sincere. George Sand was in a position to know, if any one did, the value of work as an anodyne. Presently, however, the development of the drama brought the need for other counsel and other help. The fight for the possession of poor little Jeanne Clésinger, commonly known by the pet name of "Nini," was in progress, and Solange invoked her mother as an ally.

The child was sent to and fro, to and fro, between Besançon, where Clésinger's parents lived, and Nohant. There was a day when Nini, returning after a long absence to her mother, did not recognise her. That was a painful blow, and another seemed to be imminent, for Clésinger was threatening to abduct the child. "Hide Nini," wrote Solange to her mother ; and George Sand took the precau-

tions that seemed necessary, and promised that Manceau and the others should turn the hose on Clésinger if he tried to carry out his threat.

A number of letters about Nini follow. Nini at Nohant is evidently in danger of being spoilt. She suffers from some infantile ailment, and the doctor orders the application of a blister. Nini submits only on condition that the blister shall be decorated with pink and blue ribbons, and that Manceau shall whistle her a tune while it is being applied.

George Sand finds Nini "ravishing," and wants to keep her and teach her to be good; but Solange "hungers and thirsts" for Nini, and expects to be allowed to pounce down upon Nohant and carry her off at any moment. There is a sharp exchange of opinions about this, and then there is talk of sending Nini to a convent. It would be easier to hide her from her father there than anywhere else. Nuns might be found who had no scruples, but would guard the child in their cloistered retreat as in a fortress. Better that she should be taught to believe in the Immaculate Conception than that she should fall into the hands of such women as those whose company Clésinger has taken to frequenting!

Then, in the midst of these arguments, we hear that Solange has been converted—in part if not entirely—to the Roman Catholic faith. "If I do not end by believing it all," she writes, "it will not be my fault: *Ma fille vaut bien une messe*"; and she goes on to define the articles of her belief: "I am convinced of the divinity of Jesus Christ; but I cannot swallow the Immaculate Conception, the worship of the Virgin, and the infallibility of the Church." None the less she means to live a "new life," and regards herself not as a Protestant but as a Catholic in the making, and receives her "first communion" on that hypothesis.

When the news comes, a week later, that the Tribunal has decided that Nini shall be brought up by her grandmother, it seems an instance of Providence rewarding piety. But George Sand, recalling her own experiences of such litigation, warns her that all is not yet over—that an appeal is possible; and then we turn another page of the correspondence and read of Nini's death.

One might have expected the common sorrow to draw mother and daughter closer together. Perhaps it did so for a little while—but not for long. The natural course, if George Sand and Solange had been like other people, would have seemed to be for the daughter to make her home thenceforward with her mother at Nohant. But they were both different from other people, and though Solange more than once made the suggestion, George Sand raised objections. Solange, she said, would "catch cold" at Nohant; her desire to be near the little one's grave was morbid. Moreover:—

"You know that I have other reasons for not wishing you to return here. You would cause me great annoyance if you insisted upon visiting the neighbourhood at the present time. I hope it will not be your pleasure to inflict this pain upon me, and I cannot believe that it will.'

Those were her views in 1855, and we find her repeating them in 1861. No biographer can suggest a better reason than a fear that Solange would interupt her in the task ot "making copy for Buloz"; and there may well have been grounds for that apprehension. Solange was as violent as the whirlwind, and as irresponsible. But she was wounded by the tone her mother took; and though there was no

open quarrel, she and her mother thereafter mainly went separate ways.

To relate the daughter's subsequent adventures would require a separate volume; and there are, in fact, in French, two volumes* devoted to the subject. Here we can only note that the daughter's career was, to a great extent, a replica of the mother's, and of a nature to remind the mother of the proverb about curses coming home to roost.

Literature and love-making are commingled in the one career as in the other, albeit in different proportions. In the one career as in the other there was a honeymoon in Italy, whither Solange repaired as the companion of an Italian count. In the second career as in the first appears Sainte-Beuve, that lay confessor, giving paternal advice. His study strikes Solange as "something midway between a parsonage and a library," and she remarks that his housemaid is pretty. "For such a learned man—" is her comment: an example of the figure of speech which grammarians call aposiopesis. And George Sand replies: "I hope he will have as much influence on your life as he had, on certain occasions, on mine." One wonders whether, when she wrote that, she remembered in what circumstances Sainte-Beuve had introduced her to Mérimée.

Next, if we may allow ourselves to follow Solange a step farther, we find her, at the height of her youth and beauty, presiding over a literary salon in the Rue Taitbout—a salon numbering among its guests J.-J. Weiss, and Henri Fouquier, and Hervé, and Gambetta. Without visible

* "La fille de George Sand," by Georges d'Heylli, and "George Sand et sa fille," by Samuel Rocheblave.

means of subsistence, she was nevertheless living luxuriously, and seems, for some years, to have been estranged from her mother in consequence. The inferences to be drawn from her manner of life were obvious, and we must assume George Sand to have drawn them. Her own code, in the past, had been lax, but never so lax as that. She, at least, in love as in life, had always paid her way by making copy for Buloz. Whereas her daughter——

But this is not the life of Solange. We must return to George Sand, and try to make ourselves a picture of the life she was living, during the period thus reviewed, with the rest of her family at Nohant.

CHAPTER XXX

George Sand grows old with dignity : Her heart a cemetery : The account which she gave of herself to Louis d'Ulbach : And to Flaubert : A conversation at the Magny dinner : "Elle et Lui" : Correspondence with Buloz : His advice to "tone down" that work : "Lui et Elle : George Sand's rejoinder : She thinks of publishing Musset's letters : Sainte-Beuve's advice : Decision that they shall not be publishea until after her death.

WE have only to draw the picture ; no incidents remain to be related, and, literary work apart, the last quarter of a century of George Sand's life can be outlined in a few phrases.

Most of her time was passed in the interminable task of "making copy for Buloz," or in making copy for other editors when her relations with Buloz were strained. Writing never became an effort to her, even when she only wrote for money, and there never came a time when she did not need the money. If her gains were considerable, so also were her expenses ; and her earnings, after all, were but moderate, judged by modern standards, or compared with those of some of her contemporaries : Victor Hugo, for instance, or the elder Dumas, or Eugène Sue. Towards the end she computed that she had altogether earned about £40,000 with her pen—no inordinate sum when we consider how great was her celebrity and how long it lasted—and none of it was saved or invested. To the last, therefore, she continued to produce two novels nearly every year, as well as occasional plays and a number of newspaper articles. Her impecuniosity was, indeed, at times so notorious that we find Delacroix, who knew her well, noting in his Journal :—

"Gryzmala maintained, at dinner, that Madame Sand had taken money from Meyerbeer for the eulogistic articles which she wrote about him. I cannot believe it, and I protested. The poor woman is very badly in need of money. She writes too much, and writes for money. But that she should come down to the level of such mercenary hacks! No, that is incredible."

Decidedly it is incredible. Whatever George Sand's faults, there is no reason to believe that her pen was ever venal; and it would appear from a comparison of dates that she escaped from the particular monetary embarrassments to which Delacroix refers by writing the "Histoire de ma Vie." But the fact remains that she was never rich, and seldom free from anxiety, and always regarded leisure as a luxury beyond her means. The letters tell us sometimes of petty economies—a decision, for example, to go without a new winter coat. But serious economies would only have been possible if she had altered her style of living, and this she never did. She was not extravagant, but she was hospitable; and her income was just, with persistent effort, made to keep pace with her expenditure.

Her headquarters were at Nohant; and she was nearly always there. Once she visited Italy; once, when convalescent from typhoid fever, she wintered on the Riviera; sometimes she spent the summer months in watering-places on the coast of Brittany; for a little while she had a *pied-à-terre* at Palaiseau, near Paris; theatrical business brought her to Paris at intervals; during the Franco-German War she left her home to escape, not from the Prussians, but from an epidemic of smallpox. But, on the whole, she travelled little—less and less as the years advanced. Her son had

married Lina Calmatta, the daughter of the Italian engraver. He, and his wife and family, lived with her; and she delighted in the society of her grandchildren, and learnt to write with one baby sitting on her knee and another sprawling at her feet. In fine, we may say that she grew old with dignity.

It is the privilege of the intelligent to be able to do this, even after a riotous and misspent youth. It may not be a privilege of which they always avail themselves, but it is theirs. Stupid people, if they are dissolute when they are young, are sure to become pitiably grotesque when they grow old. They have no other resources than the misconduct of which they have ceased to be capable—no potentialities, no reserve of dignity, to fall back upon. George Sand's frivolous, empty-headed mother—the bird-fancier's daughter, and the camp follower of the Army or Italy—is one shocking example of the truth of the saying; so is her drunken brother—that graceless, grey-headed reprobate, Hippolyte Châtiron. But she herself had art, and intellect, and sentiment to fortify her.

There are points of view from which her conduct, in her young days, had hardly been morally distinguishable from her mother's. The Mérimée episode, the Pagello episode, the Mallefille episode—to cite but these—lacked romantic no less than ethical warrant. There are critics who, on the strength of these episodes, have summed up George Sand's character by speaking of her as "*une fille.*" Perhaps. The answer to the charge is not to be found in the details of the episodes themselves. The true defence is that George Sand was able to live down such a past as hers without adopting a penitential tone. The young generation, growing up around her, took her amours seriously, as matters of his-

torical importance, respecting her as the incarnation of the great ideas of the Romantic Movement; and she, calmly, and as though the matter were above and beyond argument, took the same view of herself, though her method of expressing it varied according to her auditor.

M. Louis d'Ulbach, wishing to write a personal article about her for a newspaper, asked her for some information about herself, and to him she wrote:—

"I am only a worthy woman who has been credited with altogether fantastic ferocities of character. The charge has been brought against me that I have not been able to love with passion. It seems to me that my life has been full of tenderness, and that people might very well be satisfied with that. At present, thank God, nothing else is asked from me, and those who are good enough to love me in spite of the lack of distinction in my life and my intelligence do not complain of me."

M. Caro, the Academician, who afterwards wrote a book about her, visited her at Nohant; and her confession to him was on the same lines as her confession to Flaubert.

"The person called George Sand picks flowers, arranges her botanical specimens, stitches dresses for her young people and costumes for the marionettes, reads music, and, above all, spends hours and hours with her grandchildren. . . . Things have not always been like that. Once she was so silly as to be young; but, as she has done no harm to any one, and experienced no evil passions, and never lived for vanity, she enjoys the happiness of a mind at ease, and the capacity of finding amusement in everything."

That was her apologetic manner with persons of whose sympathy she could not be sure; and M. Caro was only sympathetic within limits, as his book was presently to demonstrate. To other audiences George Sand spoke in another style. "My heart is a cemetery," was then the *leit-motif*; and she certainly would not have been disconcerted if she had heard Jules Sandeau's retort that it was a necropolis. In these matters, at any rate, she had no sense of humour; and she would probably have wished that she had herself, in the first instance, employed the more sonorous word. Cemetery or necropolis—what difference did it make, so long as it was her melancholy privilege to meditate among the tombs?

Yet, though the meditations may have been melancholy—as all meditations in which we mourn our dead youth as well as our dead loves are bound to be—George Sand seemed to glory in them; and we have an interesting instance of her doing so in the "Souvenirs" of Madame Juliette Adam.

It was at a dinner-party at which, besides the two ladies, there were present Flaubert, Dumas fils, and Jules and Edmond de Goncourt; and the conversation turned upon love in its relation to the novelist's art. Was it necessary to have loved in order to be a great writer of fiction? Did not the mere practice of so analytical an art deprive the writer of the capacity for passion? Madame Adam thus reports the talk:—

"It is a curious idea to state in my presence that one is barred from love because one is a writer," added George Sand, laughing.

"Still there is truth in the statement," said Edmond de Goncourt.

"Not a bit of it," retorted George Sand. "For the principal reproach that can be brought against women writers is

precisely that they have loved too much. My proof of that? I find it in my heart."

"You—you have never loved anything except the idea that you were evolving of the hero of one of your future books, marionettes, as it were, that you have dressed up to rehearse your piece," said Dumas. "Surely you don't call that loving!"

"Come now," threw in Flaubert. "We four important writers, are we *grands amoureux?*"

"I don't know, and I don't care," rejoined George Sand; "but it is silly to say—take only the latest instances—that Madame de Staël, Madame d'Agoult, Madame de Girardin, and I have not been *grandes amoureuses.* On the contrary, I think that it would now be difficult to prove that a pretty woman who writes may have plenty of talent and yet remain a simple, loving, and faithful wife."

"It would be a good subject for an essay," said Jules de Goncourt.

The note of self-satisfaction rings loudly and clearly there. "Militavi non sine gloria" might be the speaker's motto. It might also have been George Sand's motto when she sat down to write "Elle et Lui."

She had already toyed with the theme at the time when Chopin was living with her. There exists a brief fragment of a romance from her pen, begun apparently in 1842, but never finished, describing a journey to Venice with a certain Théodore, and ending with the exclamation, "Alas! poor Théodore! You could not foresee." Perhaps it was meant as a reply to Musset's "Histoire d'un merle blanc"; but that is mere conjecture, and the fragment is too brief to call for any sort of discussion.

In 1854 we find the subject cropping up again. Jacquot, the scurrilous scandalmonger who signed himself "Eugène de Mirecourt," had written something which seemed to call for a reply; and the rejoinder was printed in Alexandre Dumas' newspaper, *Le Mousquetaire*. The most striking passage in it is this:—

"You say that, after the journey to Italy, I have never seen M. de Musset again. You are mistaken. I have met him frequently, and never without shaking hands with him. I rejoice in the satisfaction of being able to assure you that I have never in my life borne malice against any one, just as I have never given any one—not even my husband, M. Dudevant—good grounds for bearing any lasting malice against me."

That was while Musset was still alive. In 1858, however, Musset was dead; and George Sand had lately composed a difference of some standing with Buloz, who had so long been acquainted with rather more than the bare outline of her great love affair. She proposed to write the story for him in full in the form of a romance; and Buloz agreed, not only that the story was one which ought to be written, but also that the *Revue des Deux Mondes* was the organ in which it ought to appear. It was as contributors to the *Revue* that the lovers had first met. Both of them had repeatedly made copy for Buloz out of their disagreements. Musset had long since given the readers of the *Revue* his version of the story in his "Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle." It was the right and proper and dramatic thing that the case for the defence should be addressed to the same audience from the same rostrum. So he argued, and George Sand retired to

the cemetery for a month, and composed the most famous of all her meditations among the tombs.

We will not stop to analyse the work. To do so would be to retell a story that has been already told, and re-examine pleas that have already been sifted. All that we have to note is that the tone is one not of apology or regret, but of self-satisfaction, and that the self-satisfaction would have been still more pronounced if Buloz had not intervened with good advice. His letter, already quoted in part, may here be quoted at length :—

"My dear George,—I have read your biographical romance. For myself, knowing the facts, and having always taken your part against Alfred, I think you have kept within the limits of truth and moderation in the portrait which you have drawn.

"But the public, not knowing all that I know, will find you rather severe. And perhaps there are some things which one should not mention when one is speaking of a person whom one has loved—I refer to pecuniary matters.

"I think, then, that when you come to look over the proofs, you will do well, for your own sake, to soften down certain passages, to make more allowances for the artist, and to represent Thérèse as less perfect. The attribute of sanctity, if I may say so, is too often attributed to Thérèse. You must weigh your words and be moderate, just as if Alfred were present and could reply.

"I have remarked, too, with pleasure, in reading the romance, that you had no intention of suggesting—and, save in a few expressions and a few brief passages, did not suggest—impressions unfavourable to the author. It is a work of an elevated character—a fine picture of the man of genius in

his life-and-death struggle with vice (in which alone the work might seem damaging to our friend)—and not a work of revenge.

"To sum up: when certain passages have been modified or suppressed, the book will perhaps be one of your finest compositions. It is clear that you were anxious to repudiate certain accusations which you have a perfect right to repudiate because they are false—for Alfred would have repudiated them himself. But you must try to repudiate them without assailing his memory (as I am pleased to see that it was your intention to do) by altering certain phrases and certain sentences at which offence might be taken. Assuredly you did not kill the poet, as some have said. You furnished him with his finest inspirations. What he wrote did not always spare you; but there was nothing for the public to lay hold upon, whereas it will have no difficulty whatever in putting the dots on the i's in your novel. . . ."

The advice here given was followed, and so was the advice conveyed in a later letter to "tone down the scenes in which Thérèse passes so easily from the embraces of Laurent to those of Palmer." Buloz opined that such scenes would shock the general public a good deal more than they shocked him, and George Sand was not too proud to defer to his judgment. None the less, there were anonymous letters of protest, followed by an outburst of wrath on the part of the Musset family. We presently find Buloz warning the author that she is accused of having incorporated in "Elle et Lui" the actual text of some of Musset's letters, and that Paul de Musset is preparing a biography of his brother in which will appear some of Tattet's letters, designed to turn the tables on her, and put her to confusion.

Paul de Musset carried out his threat to the best of his ability by writing "Lui et Elle"—a pamphlet in intention though a romance in form. Such use as seemed legitimate has been made of its contents in the course of the narrative, and there is no need to go over the ground again. Nor need we concern ourselves with "Lui," the romance contributed to the discussion by Madame Louise Colet, a woman novelist who had loved Musset, some time after his separation from George Sand. The allegations, however, seemed to call for a reply; and George Sand delivered her reply in the preface of another novel, "Jean de la Roche." The essential passage is as follows:—

"We predict, for our part, that the illustrious dead will, at the opportune moment, arise indignant from his grave. He will claim to resume possession of his own thoughts and his true feelings. He will assert the right himself to make the proud confession of his sufferings, and to uplift his voice to heaven, uttering those glorious cries of truth and justice which constitute the best portion of his soul and the most intense phase of his life. This time we shall not have to do with a romance, or a pamphlet, or a betrayal. We shall have a monument written by his own hands and consecrated to his memory by the hands of those who love him still. The monument will be erected when those who insult him have compromised themselves sufficiently. To let them go their way is the only punishment that one deigns to inflict upon them. So let them blaspheme and pass."

The significance of this is clear. It meant that George Sand proposed to publish the letters. She went so far as to pack them up and send them to Sainte-Beuve, with a request for

his advice; but the critic discouraged the idea of printing them. As literature, he thought they belonged to an extinct period—"elles sentaient trop leur 1830"—and, for the rest, the muddy waters of Camerina had been stirred sufficiently. And, once more, George Sand deferred to wise counsel, and decided that the letters should not be published until after her death. They did not, in fact, appear until many years after her death; and her final words upon the subject were as follows:—

"The dirty charges in the accusation levelled at me, and the letters themselves, prove one thing only: that behind the two romances—'La Confession d'un Enfant du Siècle' and 'Elle et Lui'—there is a true story emphasising the madness of the one and the affection of the other (the madness of both, if you prefer) but nothing odious or treacherous—nothing that leaves a stain upon hearts that were sincere.

"In later days, owing to delay, bad advice, bad companions, and increasing madness, the poet became embittered. He continued to be jealous, and he wanted to wound. But I think that many lies have been put into his mouth, and that he is less guilty than his friends have made him appear.

"Peace and forgiveness: that is the conclusion of the matter. But, in the future, a ray of light to illuminate the story!"

And thus, claiming magnanimity in addition to all her other virtues, George Sand left the subject, and returned to her grandchildren and her friends, and to the double task of making copy and growing old with dignity.

CHAPTER XXXI

George Sand's friends and visitors : Théophile Gautier at Nohant : "Ragging" Flaubert : Stories told by M. Henri Amic : Thiers' attempt to kiss George Sand : Jane Essler : Sarah Bernhardt : Why the society of actresses should be avoided : M. Emile Aucante on George Sand's manner of life and methods of work.

SAINTE-BEUVE was the only one of the writers of her own generation—the writers who made their débuts in the early days of the Romantic Movement—whom we find numbered among George Sand's friends in her later years.

Even with him she was by no means so intimate as she once had been; and death and division had sent the others very divers ways. Balzac was dead. Victor Hugo was in exile; the elder Dumas had become disreputable; Mérimée was a courtier, much too great at the Palace of Compiègne, and the reasons were obvious why he was unlikely to cultivate his society or that of Sainte-Beuve. Yet solitude—though it were the mitigated solitude of the family circle—was intolerable to her. She must always have friends about her; and she made many new friends among the more distinguished of her juniors: Dumas fils, Théophile Gautier, Turgueneff, the brothers de Goncourt, and Flaubert. She always dined with some of them at the Restaurant Magny when she was in Paris; and she generally had a house party when she was at Nohant.

Permanently in residence at Nohant there were, in addition to her son and his family, Manceau the factotum, Emile Aucante, her secretary and man of business, and Eugène Lambert, the painter. Other guests were always coming and going. With most of them, when they were absent,

she kept up a more or less regular correspondence, and even young men of promising literary talent who were introduced, or who introduced themselves, were often permitted to join the circle of her intimates. Matthew Arnold was one of those who thus presented themselves; but his account of his visit lacks picturesque detail. For that we must go to the French writers.

Théophile Gautier may be our first witness, and his deposition may be taken from Goncourt's Diary. He was asked, on his return from Nohant, how he had enjoyed himself there, and he replied :—

"It was about as amusing as a convent of Moravian brothers. Maréchal the painter and Dumas fils were there. Lunch is at ten. Madame Sand comes down with the air of a somnambulist, and remains half asleep all through the meal. After lunch we all go out in the garden and play bowls, and that wakes her up a little. At three Madame Sand goes upstairs to make copy till six. After dinner she plays patience, without speaking a word, until midnight. On the second day I said that, unless they talked literature, I should go home again. Literature! The word seemed to recall them from another world. There is only one thing that interests them all, and that is mineralogy. Everybody has his geological hammer, and never goes out without it. All the same, Manceau has fixed up Nohant very conveniently for copy-making. In whatever room she sits down, there immediately rise up in front of her, pens, blue ink, cigarette papers, Turkish tobacco, and copy paper. And the quantity that she uses! Copy-making is a function with Madame Sand. For the rest, one is made very comfortable in her house. The service, for example, is conducted

in silence. In the corridor there is a letter-box with two compartments. One of them is for letters to be posted; the other for letters directed to the inmates of the house. Happening to need a comb, I wrote, 'M. Gautier, such a room,' and my request. On the following day, at six o'clock, I was presented with thirty combs to choose from." *

Gautier writes, of course, as a boulevardier who has reluctantly quitted his favourite haunts to take part in a mode of life for which nature has not fitted him. Hence the piquancy, almost of malice, in his criticism. But the story of his sojourn at Nohant is not less piquant in the pages of M. Edmond Plauchut. We read there that he mistook George Sand's somnolence for frigidity, and went so far as to pack his traps, announcing his intention of departing early in the morning, without saying good-bye, because he had been received as if he were an unwelcome guest. Dumas, however, intervened, led "Théo" down to his hostess's study, and explained the situation boisterously, with the result that the three of them remained talking gaily together until daylight.

Nor was the life always so dull, or the hostess always so lacking in animation, as Gautier's experiences might suggest. There were the amateur dramatic performances of which enough has already been said, and there were the antics of Maurice Sand's marionettes, though these apparently palled

* A similar story is told by Charles Edmond, to whom George Sand writes thus: "We have bought you an enormous wash-hand basin, Solange having told me that you thought yours was too small. Lina has set herself in motion, and has had an immense number of basins sent here from all the country round. The Berry people, who have little use for such articles, opened their mouths in astonishment and asked if we wanted them for washing the clothes in."

upon some of the guests, and M. Caro cries out against George Sand's conviction that other people found them as amusing as she did. Reading aloud, again, was a frequent pastime. Dumas read "L'affaire Clemenceau." * Turgueneff read passages from his forthcoming works. George Sand herself did the same; and it was agreed that the true note of pathos must indeed have been struck when one of the grandchildren wept over the death of an elephant. Moreover, though the early rowdiness had ceased, "ragging" was not altogether unknown. M. Plauchut describes such an episode in which we find Flaubert figuring.

"One day, when Flaubert was more furious than usual against his publishers, or against some bourgeois or other, Maurice Sand, seeing that his mother was tired of the tirade, proposed that I and his daughters should join him in organising a 'rag' in the dining-room adjoining the apartment in which the assailant of the bourgeois was holding forth. As soon as he heard the first clatter of the tongs, Flaubert bounded towards us in a state of boiling indignation, exclaiming that he could not hear himself speak, and that we were behaving like low comedians. Madame Sand, who followed him, had, on her part, picked up the coal shovel, and allied herself with the rioters in the most spirited style. Flaubert fled like a man in terror of assassination, but quickly came back, dressed up as an Andalusian woman, and dancing the most disorderly of fandangoes."

Another of the friends of the later period was M. Henri Amic, a young man of literary ambitions who introduced himself with a letter of homage. His letter brought him an

* George Sand helped him with it. He, in return, helped her to construct "Le Marquis de Villemer."

invitation to call at Nohant, and afterwards to stay there. George Sand gave him much good advice about his work, and about other matters also. She wrote him a good many letters which have been published; and he saw her frequently in Paris as well as in the country. He was one of those who really enjoyed the marionettes, and, unlike Théophile Gautier, he managed to interest himself in the mineralogy. We owe to him a delightful story of George Sand's objections to the embraces of a statesman.

"I had been invited to dine with some distinguished people who were very anxious to receive me, and it had been quite impossible for me to refuse. But I had a horror of what is called Society, and had made my hostess promise that the party should be a small one. So far as the dinner went, this programme was observed; but, after dinner, when we adjourned to the drawing-room, there was a crush. I said nothing, but I drew Emmanuel Arago aside into a sort of vestibule, on the pretext that I had something to tell him, and then asked him to get me my cloak. I was quietly waiting for him when up came little Thiers. He immediately began to speak to me with a good deal of *empressement*, and I replied to him as best I could. But all of a sudden—I have never known why—the fancy seized him to kiss me. I declined, as you can well understand; and he seemed profoundly astonished, and looked at me out of his funny little eyes, like a man quite taken aback. When Emmanuel Arago returned, I began to laugh heartily; but poor little Thiers did not laugh. He looked furiously angry, and quite disconcerted. Monsieur Thiers a Don Juan! I am sure you cannot picture that, my young friend. You see what changes time can work in a man."

To M. Amic also we owe our knowledge of George Sand's later estimate of the theatre, and especially of actresses. Actresses, she warned her young friend, as Madame de Vigny had vainly warned her son, were very dangerous companions —infinitely more treacherous and deceitful than other women. It was not only on the boards that they played a part, and pretended. Did he want an example? Then she would tell him about Jane Essler, who had been so successful in one of the rôles of her "Beaux Messieurs de Bois-Doré."

"She lived for several years with a man of letters who was a friend of mine. One fine day she announced without rhyme or reason that she was going to leave him. The poor fellow worshipped her. He could not bear the idea of the separation, and he implored me to speak to Jane Essler. I did as he asked, and returned, heartbroken, from the interview. To all my entreaties this woman coldly replied, 'He gives me as much money as he can, but he is not rich enough for me. I am as fond of him as I am of anybody else, but I cannot be so mad as to let my youth pass without trying to establish myself in a good position.'"

They were nearly all like that, George Sand added; and she told another story, more interesting than the other because it introduces a more illustrious name.

"One day they were playing *L'Autre* at the Odéon. I went in there to see Duquesnel, and found the whole theatre in commotion. They told me that Sarah Bernhardt, the artist who played the part of Helen with such exquisite grace, had tried to poison herself. I went up to see her. I argued with her. I spoke to her of her son, and of the love and care she owed to him. I said all that a woman who is also a

mother can find to say in such a case. Sarah burst into tears and sobbed aloud. She assured me that she was horrified at the life she had so far led, that no one had ever spoken to her as I had, and that she would never forget my good advice.

"A few days afterwards, coming late to the theatre, I passed on the staircase Sarah Bernhardt and her sister Jeanne, on their way to the Bal Bullier in male costume. That was all that had come of my remonstrances and my lecture."

And the moral was, of course :—

"Beware of the women of the theatre. They are at once more seductive, more perverse, and more dangerous than other women. You must always be on your guard against them. They have—I will not say hours—but minutes of apparent sincerity ; but their motives are seldom disinterested. There are exceptions, of course, to all rules ; but the exceptions to this rule are very rare."

Truly the George Sand who spoke like that must have been a very different woman from the George Sand who found Marie Dorval "sublime," even though the relations of Marie Dorval with Alfred de Vigny had, in truth, been somewhat different from those of Jane Essler with her unnamed literary lover. Partly, it may be, the change in her attitude was brought about by her more intimate acquaintance with the theatre in the days when she was herself an accepted playwright ; but it was also, no doubt, a development involved in the art of growing old with dignity. And that dignity was, on the whole, well sustained. It always appears in the pictures of her life drawn by those who, in her later years, knew her best.

Probably the most trustworthy of all the pictures is that

drawn by M. Emile Aucante, who introduced to her by Pierre Leroux, became her secretary, and remained with her in that capacity for sixteen years. Still living at the time when the centenary of her birth was being celebrated, he was then interviewed by a representative of the *Gaulois*, to whom he poured out a rich store of recollections.

George Sand, according to him, was neither *bas bleu* nor *poseuse*, though she could be *grand dame* when she chose. On the contrary, she was shy, and talked little, preferring to listen to the conversation of others, and was very reluctant to speak of her own books, the contents of which she forgot as soon as she had finished them. Her habits, too, were simple. What jewellery she wore was mostly false, and she made her own caps and trimmed her own hats, and was very attentive to the needs of her poorer neighbours, not only visiting them when they were sick, but paying a physician and a chemist an annual salary to look after them. Her work, however, was her chief interest; and, living by line and rule, she passed her days as follows:—

"Madame Sand used to get up at one in the afternoon and come down to the dining-room just as her family and guests were finishing lunch. She never ate anything but a boiled egg, and never drank anything but a cup of black coffee without sugar. Then, unless the weather was very bad, she used to go out into the garden, and stay working there—clipping the roses, removing the withered flowers, etc.—until four; and sometimes she took her guests, or let them take her, for excursions in the neighbouring woods. She loved the trees; but these excursions always had their motive. She brought back from them plants, flowers, minerals, and fossils for her collections. Her son Maurice, who devoted himself especially

to entomology, used to look for certain chrysalides, from which butterflies of the most marvellous beauty would presently emerge. . . .

"At about four Madame Sand used to return to the house. That was the hour at which the post came in, and she never left a letter unanswered. If her complete correspondence were published, it would fill as many volumes as her collected works.

"The dinner bell rang at a quarter to six, and at six we sat down to dinner. Madame Sand had an excellent appetite, though she ate but moderately. She drank nothing but water then, though she took a little Spanish wine at night, when she was working.

"After dinner, the party went out into the garden for a chat; but soon returned to the drawing-room, where, for a short time, they played cards or dominoes. Sometimes, too, there was a little music; for Madame Sand was an excellent musician. Afterwards somebody read aloud, either from some new book, or from one of Madame Sand's favourite authors: Walter Scott, or Cooper, or Gabriel Ferry, or Balzac. Madame Sand used to dress marionettes while she listened, for her hands were never idle.

"At midnight Madame Sand withdrew. She went upstairs to her study and worked until five or six in the morning. Then she slept uninterruptedly until midday, and that amount of sleep sufficed for her."

There follows an interesting account of George Sand's methods of work:—

"Madame Sand wrote her novels on ordinary notepaper. I used to prepare her a number of little copy-books, consisting of twenty sheets sewn together. Her object was to write

exactly the same number of lines on each sheet. This was necessary in order to calculate the number of letters contained in each work. Her novels were, in fact, sold before they were written, on the basis of so much for so many letters; and she had to adhere to the stipulated length, neither exceeding nor surpassing it.

"As soon as one novel was finished she began another, without pause or interruption. Simply making a few notes of the names of the principal personages, their respective characters, and the scene in which the story was to be laid, she then set to work without further delay.

"No outline of the plot was ever written out. Had she any fixed plan, even of the vaguest description, in her head? All that I can say for certain is that, except when she was at work, she never seemed to be preoccupied with her subject, and never talked about her books while she was engaged upon them.

"She, who was often so embarrassed in her speech, wrote with incredible facility, and was never at a loss for a word. As each copy-book was finished, she handed it over to me, and I made a copy of it, which was sold in Belgium in the days when literary piracy was still allowed there. It often happened that Madame Sand got appreciably ahead of me, and when I expressed my astonishment at this, she replied, 'What! You don't understand my going faster than you? The explanation is very simple. When you have copied a sentence, you have to read the next one before you can write it out. This stops you for a moment, and these repeated stoppages necessarily leave you behind me, seeing that I write straight ahead without ever losing a second.'

"When a novel was finished, Madame Sand used to gather her manuscript together, without correcting it, and leave it

at the bottom of a drawer for a fortnight. Then she took it out again, and read it over as if it were the work of another hand. She 'cut' it a little, and erased or altered expressions that did not please her; but she never made any changes of any importance.

"She was passionately fond of the *tortoises* that lived in her study, at the bottom of an open box which had to be put near the fire in winter in order that they might not suffer from the cold. One of them, called *La Mayotte*, had the privilege of crawling about her desk and looking at her while she worked."

And so forth. The details are trivial undoubtedly, but it is of little details that pictures are composed, and it is through little details that characters reveal themselves.

CHAPTER XXXII

Friendship with Flaubert : The correspondence : Criticism of books and criticism of life : George Sand's optimism : Her last illness and death.

WE have finished with the anecdotes and the small details; and our last glimpse at George Sand's last years may best be taken through her correspondence with Flaubert. The letters which she wrote to him are the outstanding monument of that period of her life, and the proof, convincing beyond all others, that, freed at last from the sway of the passions, she knew how to grow old with dignity.

The correspondents first met, presumably, at one of the Magny dinners. They began to exchange letters regularly in 1866, when George Sand was sixty-two and Flaubert forty-five; and they continued to write regularly—often at intervals of only a few days—until George Sand's death at the age of seventy-two, Flaubert being then fifty-five. The suggestion has never been made that they were anything more than friends. It is evident from the nature of the letters that they were not. But the friendship was of the closest and most intimate character—so intimate that each of them, at one time, offered to lend the other money. They opened their hearts freely to each other, and revealed their secrets in a true spirit of *camaraderie*.

The contents of the letters are infinitely various. Sometimes they take us behind the scenes, and relate the gossip of the literary *coulisses* : we find Flaubert relating the story of Sainte-Beuve's quarrel with Princess Mathilde, and acting as George Sand's confidential intermediary, charged to explain that a certain novel of hers was not intended to reflect, as had been alleged, upon the conduct of Empress Eugénie.

At other times questions of literary criticism arise ; and we see Flaubert deploring the folly of Sainte-Beuve, who persists upon writing for the papers instead of writing books, and drawing George Sand's attention to the works of those rising young authors, Emile Zola and Alphonse Daudet. The political references are frequent ; and we note that George Sand has lost the illusions of her red-hot Republican days without losing her hopes for the future of her country, and are impressed by the sanity of her outlook on public affairs at the time when her countrymen are parading Paris with the shout of "à Berlin !"

Very frequent, too, and very interesting, are the letters in which the two authors praise, and judge, each other's books. Flaubert, indeed, expressed an enthusiasm which one would not have expected him to feel, and probably made mental reservations. Such pleasure as he found in the novels of George Sand's later period can hardly have been what he regarded as the highest kind of pleasure. He judged leniently one supposes, out of his respect for George Sand's years, and because he liked her and was under the spell of a personality stronger than his own. But she, on her part, spoke out, and proved herself a critic of no mean discrimination.

"Salammbô" and "L'Education sentimentale"—those splendid failures—were the works about which she had most to say. She recognised them as works of genius, and yet she understood the reasons why they had failed to attract. "Salammbô" had failed because of the impossibility of interesting modern readers in ancient heroes, especially when presented in pages overloaded with archæological detail. "L'Education sentimentale" had failed because it did not appeal to the young. It was a book of disillusion, and therefore it was necessary to be middle-aged in order to perceive

how true it was. The young were discouraged by the pessimism. It seemed to tell them that life was not worth while, whereas their hearts and their instincts spoke otherwise. That was what came of trying to write with too close fidelity to life.

That was her judgment; and though it was the judgment of a writer whose very different methods produced works of a very inferior calibre, it is on a higher plane than the verdicts of Francisque Sarcey, and René Saint-Taillandier, and Saint-Victor, and other contemporary critics. And yet, good as the criticism is, the real interest of the letters depends not upon their criticism of books, but upon their criticism of life. They are full of that sort of criticism, and most clearly bring out the personalities as well as the points of view of the two writers who exchange opinions and philosophies.

Sometimes the discussion turns on rather curious subjects. Throughout a considerable series of letters the question at issue is: Ought a certain young man—his name is given—who is engaged, but cannot be married for three or four years to come, to resist temptation and remain chaste until his wedding day? Flaubert, with characteristic cynicism, denounces the policy as "absurd"; George Sand finds reasons for recommending it. It seems a strange topic for argument between an elderly lady and a middle-aged man; but their opposing solutions of the problem show how age, which was souring the one, had only mellowed the other. And such digressions at any rate are rare. As a rule, it is round the circumstances of the writers' own lives that the rival philosophies do battle. Their temperaments clash strangely, and their rôles seem to be inverted. It is the man's voice that is shrill; the woman's that is confident and strong. George Sand speaks almost as the Great Physician, bidding the sick arise and walk.

In their origin Flaubert's ailments were physical; he was epileptic. His liability to sudden seizures had led him to adopt a solitary mode of life; and the solitude, combined with his preoccupation with purely literary interests, had reacted on his mind. He had his friends of both sexes; but he saw little of them, and, so far as the mass of mankind were concerned, he was at once a misanthropist and a misogynist. The average man was for him a "bourgeois," and he hated the bourgeois as the Anti-Semites hate the Jews. The main purpose of most of his books was to ridicule and irritate the bourgeois; and he discovered the profound truth that no weapon is so formidable against them as a minute description of their habits—that the wounds thus inflicted hurt the more because there is no means of parrying the thrusts.

It was an ingenious game, and he played it with unrivalled skill; but he got little satisfaction from his prowess. He might chuckle over it; but he hated too bitterly for the whole-hearted laughter that would have saved him. As a consequence the bourgeois were able to avenge themselves sufficiently by continuing to behave as before. Their doing so caused him something very like physical pain. Not his books only but his conversation consisted of increasingly desperate tirades against them; and it became a fixed idea that life was intolerable because of the density and folly of his fellow-creatures. He dwelt alone in a suburb of Rouen with this fixed idea, and with a deaf and bedridden mother. The idea became an obsession; and he suffered, if ever any man did, from the malady which has been called "*impuissance de vivre.*"

While he was in this state George Sand came to him as a missionary with stimulating exhortations and abundant good

advice. Not all her advice, it is true, would be endorsed by preachers of more orthodox persuasions. The moralists would approve her suggestion that he should get married, but not her alternative proposal that he should "have mistresses." But we must remember that the ordinary moralist would have made no impression on Flaubert, who would merely have called him a bourgeois, and have considered the discussion closed. It was precisely because she spoke as one having authority and not as the bourgeois that George Sand gained a hearing. Flaubert did not, indeed, follow her counsel in this particular, nor did he, in any particular, follow it very closely. But at least he listened to her, and she did him good.

Remaining an idealist and an optimist, she devoted all her spare energy to taking him out of himself, and trying to induce him to look upon life with more cheerful eyes. She invited him to Nohant far more often than she could persuade him to come, promising that her children—and her marionettes—should make him laugh whether he would or not. She implored him not to concern himself so much about human folly, seeing that the foolish would continue to be foolish in spite of all his furious denunciations; and she delivered formal little lectures such as this :—

"You mustn't be ill, and you mustn't be always grumbling, my dear old troubadour. You must cough it off your chest, and blow your nose, and get well, and announce that France is mad, and that humanity is idiotic, and that we are all animals badly turned out; but, at the same time, you must love yourself, and your fellow-creatures, and, above all, you must love your friends. I too have my melancholy hours. But then I look at my 'flowers'—those two little ones who are

always smiling—and their charming mother, and my son, that sagacious naturalist, whom the end of the world would still find hunting for specimens, and cataloguing them, doing his day's work as each day comes, and yet gay as Punch himself at the rare hours at which he allows himself to rest."

Or such as this :—

"The little girls are running about like rabbits in the midst of bushes as tall as themselves. How good life is when the objects of one's love are alive and active ! You are the one *black point* in the life of my heart, because you are melancholy and will not look up at the sun. As for the people who are indifferent to me, I am equally indifferent to their acts of malice or folly towards me or towards each other. These things will pass as the rain passes. The thing that abides is a good heart's feeling for the beautiful. You have both the good heart and the feeling. Then—good gracious ! —you have no right to be anything but happy. Perhaps your life has missed that intrusion of the *feminine sentiment* at which you have turned up your nose. I know that women are not worth much ; but perhaps, in order to be happy, it is necessary to have been unhappy in the past."

That is the note on which one likes to end. The cynic might suggest that George Sand had won her way to ultimate happiness quite as much through the unhappiness which she had inflicted on others as through that which she had herself endured. Liszt and Chopin and Musset would have said so ; so too, perhaps, would Sandeau and Mallefille, who spent so much of their old age in discussing the woman whom they both had loved. But the rights and wrongs in most of the cases were tangled ; and if George Sand had been fickle, at

least she had never been "interested"; and she too had suffered at her hours, in spite of her complacent conviction that whatever she did was right; and from suffering she had gathered strength.

She had gathered strength, and she had developed. The crude philosophies of youth had left her together with its passions. There had been a time, indeed, when there was little but her intellect to distinguish her from the grisettes; but her intellect had triumphed, and no disappointment had soured her. She no longer railed at life because it did not yield her impossible bliss, but accepted life as it was, and found that it was very good. She had once been very mad, but she now was very sane. She had lived down scandals as well as troubles; and the temper of her old age was serene, reminding us, as one would like the closing years of every life to do, of that Land of Beulah "where the sun shineth night and day," and where the pilgrims foregathered and waited for the messenger to come with his token—"an arrow with a point sharpened with love,"—and summon them to cross the River.

Almost to the last George Sand enjoyed good health. In one of the last letters—perhaps it was *the* last letter—that she wrote, she told her physician, Dr. Favre of Paris, that she felt well though she was not without anxiety.

"The general state of my health has not deteriorated, and in spite of my age—I shall soon be seventy-two—I feel no symptoms of senility. My legs are vigorous; my sight is better than it has been for the last twenty years; my sleep is untroubled; my hands are as firm and skilful as when I was young. . . . Only, a portion of the functions of life being now almost completely suppressed, I wonder where I am

going, and whether I must not expect to take my departure suddenly one of these fine mornings."

The end, however, was not to come quite so suddenly as she expected. Ever since her serious illness from typhoid fever, she had suffered from gastric troubles; and now they were not only recurring, but increasing in severity. She complained, in a letter to Flaubert, of "cruel cramps in the stomach," of "atrocious persistence"; but she made as light of them as she could.

"Physical suffering is a good lesson when it leaves your mind free to profit by it. One learns to endure it and to conquer it. Of course one has some moments of discouragement in which one throws oneself upon one's bed. But, for my part, I always think of what my old curé used to say when he had the gout: *Either it will pass away, or else I shall pass away.* And then he used to laugh, pleased with his little joke."

She rallied after that, as the letter to Dr. Favre, which was written two months later, shows; but not for long. What is described as paralysis of the intestines developed into something of the nature of peritonitis—very possibly appendicitis. On May 30, 1876, George Sand took to the bed which she was never again to leave. Maurice Sand telegraphed to her daughter and her most intimate friends. Solange came, and so did M. Plauchut, and M. Amic, who could not even sufficiently command his feelings to be taken to her bedside. Dr. Péan operated, and for a moment there was hope; but the hope quickly faded. George Sand sank slowly, and died on June 8.

The village priest had called, offering his ministrations, but had been sent away again. She had not asked for him,

he was told; they must not take the risk of troubling instead of soothing the last moments of a dying woman. So the good man retired, and was seen praying underneath her bedroom window. "I heard her cries of pain," he said, "and I prayed God to extend His infinite pity to her, and then I pronounced the benediction. If my benediction was not rejected, it will have reached her."

That was at eight o'clock in the morning. At ten, Dr. Favre, who had been summoned from Paris and was with her, came down to the party gathered in the salon, and told them that all was over.

The funeral took place in the graveyard of the humble Nohant church; and all literary France was represented. Among others there attended Prince Napoleon, Gustave Flaubert, Ernest Renan, Edouard Cadol, Paul Meurice, Charles Edmond, Armand Silvestre, Eugène Lambert, Emile Aucante, and Dumas fils. Victor Hugo had sent from Paris one of his most magniloquent discourses, which he begged Paul Meurice to read for him—"I weep for one who is dead, and I salute one who is immortal"—but Dumas paid a homage which touches the heart far more. He had sat up all night composing the funeral oration which he had promised to deliver; and when the time came he broke down and sobbed so that he could not speak it.

INDEX

Adam, Madame Juliette, 272
Agoult, Comtesse d', 135, 136, 152, 156, 159, 166–178, 183, 184, 189, 191, 192, 217, 252, 272
Allart, Madame, 111
Amic, 36, 282, 284, 297
Arago, Emmanuel, 171, 283
Arnold, Matthew, 260, 280
Aucante, Emile, 279, 286–289, 298

Ballanche, 174
Balzac, 184, 187–189, 279
Béranger, 29
Berlioz, 113, 196
Bernhardt, Sarah, 284, 285
Boucoiran, Jules, 23, 25–27, 29, 53, 70, 87, 89, 100, 101, 105, 106, 109, 118–120, 148
Bouillon, Duc de, 3
Buloz, 34, 53, 63, 84, 85, 105, 119, 178, 192, 205, 220, 274, 276

Cadol, Edouard, 298
Calmatta, Lina, 270
Caro, 271, 272, 282
Cazamajou, Madame. *See also* Caroline Delaborde, 144
Chateaubriand, 12, 14
Châtiron, Hippolyte, 5, 10, 15, 19, 22, 35, 133, 134, 215, 217, 270
Chopin, Frédéric, 177, 192–230, 234–249, 252, 260, 273
Claretie, M. Jules, 42
Clésinger, 230, 232–234, 238, 239, 261–264
Clésinger, Jeanne, 263–265.
Clésinger, Madame. *See also* Solange Sand, 235.
Colet, Louise, 277

Daudet, Alphonse, 291
Déjazet, Madame, 82
Delaborde, Caroline, 5, 9. *See also* Madame Cazamajou.
Delaborde, Lucie, 6, 9
Delaborde, Sophie. *See also* Madame Maurice Dupin, 5, 6
Delacroix, 110, 114, 196, 217, 268, 269

Deschatres, 6, 12
Didier, Charles, 174
Dorval, Marie, 40, 43, 127, 189, 252, 285
Dudevant, Casimir, 18–20, 35, 133–135, 137–146, 155, 165, 172, 179, 214, 239, 240, 274
Dudevant, Madame. *See also* Aurore Dupin and George Sand, 21, 23, 25–28, 30–34, 138–141
Dumas, Alexandre, 51, 183, 268, 273, 279, 282
Dumas, fils, 211, 212, 272, 279, 280, 298
Dupin, Amadine-Aurore-Lucie. *See also* George Sand, 1, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17–21
Dupin, Madame, 5, 6, 8–10, 12, 14, 16
Dupin, Maurice, 5, 6, 9, 10
Dupin, Madame Maurice. *See also* Sophie Delaborde, 8–10, 14, 16, 17, 178, 179
Dupin de Francueil, M., 3, 4, 5
Duplessis, 18
Duteil, Agasta, 136
Duvernet, 26, 32

Edmond, Charles, 298
Epinay, M. d', 3
Epinay, Madame d', 3
Eugénie, Empress, 290

Favre, Dr., 296–298
Flaubert, 272, 273, 279, 282, 290–294, 298
Fleury, 26
Foucher, Paul, 49
Fouquier, Henri, 266
Frederic Augustus II., 1

Gautier, Théophile, 279–281
Girardin, Madame de, 273
Goncourt, Edmond de, 260, 272, 279
Goncourt, Jules de, 272, 273, 279
Grimm, 3
Grysmala, 234, 269
Guéroult, 136, 166

Hanska, Madame de, 187
Heine, 167, 174, 196
Hervé, 266
Horn, Comte de, 4
Houghton, Lord, 47
Hugo, Victor, 47, 49, 225, 252, 257, 268, 279, 298

Jouffroy, 130

Kalkbrenner, 194
Kératry, M. de, 28
Königsmark, Aurora Von, 1

La Harpe, 3
Lambert, Eugène, 237, 279, 298
Lamennais, 111, 159, 160, 166, 168, 171, 178, 189, 258
Latouche, 28, 29
Leroux, Pierre, 173, 185, 186, 190–192, 258, 286
Liszt, 111, 113, 117, 121, 152, 159, 166–176, 178, 189, 194–196, 199, 217, 222, 229, 247, 252

Mallefille, 177, 182–186, 189, 191, 192, 215, 270
Manceau, 260, 261, 264, 279, 280
Marliani, Madame, 173, 237, 239
Marmontel, 2
Mathilde, Princess, 127, 174, 290
Mendelssohn, 196
Mérimée, Prosper, 44–47, 50, 56, 75, 78, 148, 257, 266, 270, 279
Meurice, Paul, 298
Meyerbeer, 114, 196, 269
Michel de Bourges, 132, 133, 138, 141–143, 147–160, 166, 171, 172, 174, 178, 180–183, 185, 190, 192, 258
Michel, Madame, 155
Michiewics, 174, 196
Moscheles, 195
Musset, Alfred de, 45, 47–63, 66–73, 76–94, 96, 101–104, 108–129, 134, 148, 164, 167, 184, 188, 190, 199, 208, 217, 220, 257, 273–276
Musset, Madame de, 53, 57, 84
Musset, Madame Lardin de, 53, 80, 109
Musset, Marquis de, 48

Musset-Pathay, M. de, 48
Musset, Paul de, 53, 56–59, 61, 62, 70, 71, 80, 84, 123, 276–278

Napoleon, Prince, 197, 298
Nohant, 5, 10–12, 20, 22, 24, 25, 38, 57, 103, 109, 115, 123, 129, 134, 136, 159, 166, 174, 181, 184, 186, 187, 209, 210, 213, 215, 229, 234, 235, 246, 264, 265, 267, 269, 271, 279–283, 294, 298
Nourrit, Adolphe, 174, 196

Pagello, Dr., 63–81, 83, 85, 88, 89, 91–107, 108, 129, 138, 184, 206, 220, 270
Papet, 53, 109, 122, 123, 179
Pelletan, Eugène, 176, 178, 182
Pictet, Major, 172, 200
Planche, Gustave, 47, 53, 54, 55, 57, 109
Potocka, Countess Delphine, 245

Radziwill, Prince Valentin, 195
Récamier, Madame, 28, 174
Regnault, Emile, 36, 37, 39
Renan, Ernest, 298
Rinteau, Geneviève, 1
Rinteau, Marie, 1, 2
Rollinat, 109, 119
Ronchaud, Louis de, 174
Rothschild, Baron James de, 195
Rousseau, 3, 5, 14, 253, 256
Rozières, Mademoiselle de, 145, 215, 217, 218, 244

Sainte-Beuve 44, 45, 47, 49, 50, 55, 57, 82, 110, 111, 113, 123, 125, 130, 132, 174, 252, 266, 277–279, 290, 291
Saint-Simon, 31, 160
Saint-Simonians, 34, 122, 150, 160–166, 170, 252
Sand, George, 1, *et passim*
Sand, Maurice, 22, 23, 29, 35, 57, 60, 61, 115, 134, 135, 143, 144, 153, 159, 166, 172, 176, 182, 202, 206, 207, 214–217, 224, 238, 240, 241, 245, 281, 282, 286, 295, 297
Sand, Solange, 22, 29, 34, 44, 57, 134, 143, 144, 166, 172, 179, 202, 206, 207, 215, 216, 221, 223, 224, 225, 230–241, 245, 261–267, 297

Sandeau, Jules, 26, 29, 30, 31, 36, 37, 39, 40, 43, 45, 47, 63, 87, 129, 148, 184, 188, 257, 272, 279
Sarcey, Francisque, 292
Saxe, Aurore de, 4
Saxe, Maurice de, 1, 2, 6
Schoelcher, Victor, 174
Schumann, 196
Sèze, Aurélien de, 20, 21, 43, 139, 143
Silvestre, Armand, 298
Slowacki, 196, 197
Staël, Madame de, 253, 273
Stendhal, 60
Sterling, Miss, 242, 245
"Stern, Daniel." *See also* Comtesse d'Agoult, 175
Sue, Eugène, 174, 268

Tattet, Alfred, 82, 83, 106, 109, 115–117, 276
Thiers, 283
Thiot-Varennes, Maître, 138–141, 143
Turgueneff, 217, 279, 282

Ulbach, Louis d', 271

Verrières, Geneviève de. *See also* Rinteau, 3
Verrières, Marie de. *See also* Rinteau, 2, 4
Viardot, Madame, 217, 224
Vigny, Alfred de, 43, 127, 252, 285
Villeneuve, René de, 16

Weiss, J.-J., 266
Wieck, Clara, 196
Wodzinska, Marie, 192, 196–198, 202

Zola, Emile, 291

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